# LUMPEN

A journal for poor and working class writers

Issue 003
May 2020

Image by Mariah Pearl

**Lumpen**

A Journal for Poor and Working Class Writing
Issue 03

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We printed this issue using an online print service because printing co-ops aren't affordable to us. All workers still got paid. But sadly, there was at least one boss involved in the process of publishing this journal.

# Contents

Editorial - Hannah Pearce - 1

A Call For Solidarity - Luke Campbell - 8

Madness - Sophie Carapatian - 20

Poems - Chris Hubble - 26

A Personal Account of Precarity, Class and Race - Sam Siva - 29

Hardships. Freedoms. Knockbacks. - John Bowden - 34

Killing the Dominant Male for a Revolutionary Wales - Heledd Williams - 42

Jake Hawkey - 2 Poems - 52

Suicide Daughter - Zoe Naylor - 54

Code Switch - Hannah Batley - 69

Matriculation - Max Brown - 70

Radical Child Phenomenology - Dudley II - 76

A Working Class State of Mind - Colin Burett - 87

Lend Me Some Sugar, I Am Your Neighbor - Ciara Fears - 96

Exploring Social Housing - Martha Wragg - 98

Read When It's Too Late - Kate Thomas - 108

Jacob Reposing - Frank Rafetty - 112

The Jab - Rebecca Metclaffe - 115

The Old Men Sing Jerusalem - Gaynor Beesley - 128

How to Guide for Writing - 131

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# Editorial

Lockdown. I think the first thing I want to make apparent is that we aren't in prison. The language used to describe the current circumstances makes us think that we are sharing the experience of the incarcerated; or that discipline and punishment are no longer limited to the prison walls and we now all have something in common, less freedom. This prison rhetoric comes from this loss of personal identity, and the autonomy to do whatever we like that comes with it. But on top of this, there is a desire to absolve ourselves of responsibility. I would like to think many out there would maintain physical isolation during this pandemic even without the government mandate… but I don't think we readily have that type of collective power.

I think what we are attempting to express with this prison analogy is the shifting of what is shared and common, and what is personal and individual. The imprisoned person becomes just a number, with a cell and uniform. The punishment is having your selfhood taken away. The not-imprisoned however, are experiencing something altogether different. The prison rhetoric speaks to the juggling of the shared responsibility we now have to keep others safe, the

maintaining of our previous lifestyles, and the individual autonomy some may feel hell bent on maintaining. It's a heightened sense of reality and everything is jumping frantically between abundance and scarcity. Time, for example, where has it gone? And why do we have so much of it? This augmented reality we are living in is disorientating, and the capitalists in our heads are telling us we are failures for not being faster, smarter, cooler, and harder. All of this can be encapsulated in the quote 'If you don't come out of this with a new skill, you never lacked time, you lacked discipline'. The middle class got the prevailing say on this matter, so bread baking, piano playing, and fitness regimes ensued.

Killing time during this time out has led many (who can afford to) to focus on the bottom end of their to do list. Trying to be better than their previous selves in more ways than one. People want to come out of this feeling stronger and more able. Drawing parallels with the prison inmate who makes use of all that time alone by reading books and doing 1000 bench presses a day. To finally return to normality more disciplined, more focused and possessing more wisdom than before. This is a television version of what we think prison is and what we think situations like this have to be like. But we aren't in time out either. The people taking up the paths in lycra are not the people who felt isolated even before this started, or the staff who have to continue working, putting themselves and others at risk of death. For most, this period of social isolation is really, painfully hard. Although, I do believe many furloughed staff probably feel happy that they don't have to do their three jobs on minimum wage and can live as though a universal basic income actually exists. And it isn't a bad thing that there has been a surge of middle class people applying for Universal Credit, causing the government to loosen the noose. This aspect of the current reality can help us see what life could have been like if the government didn't punish poor people. But the poor are still being punished.

This situation has been shit. Thousands are dead, and those

who are marginalised are the most affected. Consequently many including myself and another member of Class Work are coming to terms with loss. Trying to feel anything that isn't a cloudy mixture of depression, grief, or fatigue is making me question my existence, work is a slog, and writing feels impossible. This is nothing new. Usually when I'm going through a difficult experience I disconnect and avoid writing as much as I can. Because writing would make me real, or at least cause me to face my own madness. Ironic, considering my job is to help others to write.

If you are anything like me, then writing may feel like looking through a hall of endless mirrors, especially if you're at odds with yourself. It's disorientating and scary. There are no clear parameters and you feel adrift amongst different versions of yourself. In a time of crisis, like now for instance, looking at yourself too deeply may feel like the beginning of something you know you can't follow through. So, I think the avoidance of writing often is to do with the individualising and isolating effects of bringing yourself into meaning. Perhaps it's like that mental health therapist you know you need, but you're scared of trying and then failing to find the right one. Not trying at all leaves at least some hope.

Like counselling, writing can help to separate yourself from the mass - the chaos, the worries, and other people, ensuring one isn't permanently lost to the other. The weird side-effects of this quarantine period can be found in this feedback loop between the self and the mass. The dominant narrative is that we-are-all-in-this-together, and if Boris Johnson can wander around shaking hands with people, getting sick, relying on the services he's been pilfering, and surviving, then we all can. But this one-for-the-team rhetoric is only roused when capital is at stake. So let's all clap. And let's clap for him and his new kid who is named after the nurse who isn't paid enough for his tyranny. It's a confusing logic, where we all must work/not-work, travel/not travel, carry on as normal/what the fuck is normal. We are all lost in the madness of the

masses, and becoming self serving and self hating disciplinarians because of it.

Perhaps being an editor (or some sort of facilitator of others' work) is vicarious, and actually, perhaps it's not ironic at all: Surrounding myself with something that I've always found tough, facilitating others to do something that I find rarely achievable, especially when I need it the most… maybe it's healing? Maybe we are supposed to study what we find the most difficult? Lumpen is for those who feel like they've been excluded from the mainstream, and along with that, have at some point convinced themselves that things like writing are for others and not for themselves. So perhaps rather than irony, Lumpen is mostly for those who can't or won't write, and as editors, we pass on the baton because we know what it's like to momentarily find the words before losing them again.

This issue of Lumpen is one month late. That's okay. We don't expect others to act "normally" during the pandemic so we shouldn't have to either. Whilst we had to slow down for a myriad of reasons, we used the time to think about ways to deepen connections when our real life connections are absent. This time round, we called upon other artists to participate in the design of the issue. Much of the visual work inside is done by artists and not just by me this time. Giving some time to the artwork felt specifically important now, because, as mentioned earlier, we can't always write, but now more than ever expression feels crucial. Visual work, especially work done by working class and poor folk isn't compensated or valued enough. We want the artwork in Lumpen to break up the text, mostly to encourage those who struggle to read to read it. We also want the artwork to speak for itself and to find ways to communicate ideas rather than always relying on text to do that for us.

Image by Georgia Anderson

For me it feels important to give a platform to visual artists, because as someone who went to art school during the austerity cuts, I learned quickly that university wasn't a way out of poverty, especially an education that wasn't vocational. I am incredibly lucky to have had the education I had but by no means did I learn to use those skills to survive, and to survive relatively well, till much later. What I learned was that artists from poor and working class backgrounds can't wait for the next Sackler to put their work into his next big show. I read Tracey Emin's autobiography when I was a teen, and even then I knew that I didn't possess the exhibitionist, hyper-individualist character traits to turn myself into an artist. It wasn't until recently that I realised this type of success is a capitalist dream with little to no emancipatory effect. Any type of creative work done by people like us needs to be propagated, held up, and supported by other people like us.

And of course, we must love and support each other.

Image by Ceinwen

# A Call for Solidarity:

## Tollcross Community Action Network and the Covid-19 Outbreak

Luke Campbell

In late 2019 and early 2020 the coronavirus Covid-19 spread rapidly throughout the world, resulting in national lockdowns and extreme anxiety as supermarket stock became sparse and health services were pushed beyond capacity. Amidst the panic buying on the ground and failures to react appropriately at the U.K. Government level, a wealth of community-run initiatives rapidly developed throughout Scotland, the U.K., and beyond. Newly motivated and seasoned community organisers quickly established Facebook Groups and appropriately named Twitter hashtags that sought to identify those with the means, health, capacity, and time to help others suddenly faced with unemployment, homelessness, and either self-imposed or healthcare sector recommended isolation and quarantining. During this time, an organisation for whom I am the sole paid and part-time employee, the Tollcross Community Action Network (T.C.A.N.), sought to sustain our weekly Community

Hub operated in partnership with the Tollcross Foodbank for as long as possible, continuing our front-line support for those living in social or economic isolation, experiencing food poverty, or in need of assistance in understanding medical correspondence or bills. Produced and submitted in late March 2020, this submission briefly details the struggles, support, and lessons we learnt during the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Positionality and Reflexivity

A queer working class community worker and somehow a part-time academic working between the universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and the West of Scotland, I've been involved in community-based practice for just over a decade. Born in Paisley, I spent most of my life in Dundee, before moving to Edinburgh in 2012. I've now worked as the Development Worker for T.C.A.N. for just over fourteen months. As a practitioner with more than ten years experience in anti-racism, social inclusion, queer-focused, and anti-homelessness services, I cannot stress enough that T.C.A.N. has been the hardest 'sell' to funders that I've ever faced. With adult education, youth work, and community development services facing particular difficulties as demands are placed on them to provide certificates and qualifications that will supposedly make out-of-work individuals more employable, many organisations have been forced to radically alter their practice. The Community Hub cannot become self-sustaining or self-sufficient in terms of finance. Gradually, we've been able to establish links with advice and support services, local employment support projects, a housing association, Edinburgh College, a researcher at the University of Glasgow, a local theatre company, and several others who have engaged in consultation or provided on-site support for and with folk often struggling to access traditional forms of assistance. If anyone is interested in supporting our work or partnering with our organisation, please get in touch using the details offered underneath the Conclusions section of this article.

## About T.C.A.N.

Established in late 2016, T.C.A.N. were born out of a community co-investigation in the mould of the late Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's who advocated cooperative means of struggling towards social change. Over several months, long-established organisations such as Edinburgh's Adult Learning Project (A.L.P.) and the Central Church joined with community activists in the Scottish capital's Tollcross and Fountainbridge areas to address contemporary needs locally, with support for homeless folk, queer people, and access to affordable housing among the key issues identified. This investigation ultimately led to the creation of the Community Hub which has been in operation since Spring 2017 offering tea, coffee, social support, signposting, and guidance to those who generally first become aware of the Hub when accessing support around food poverty. Until recently, we were able to provide specialised one-to-one aid thanks to a partnership with Citizens Advice Edinburgh - a service we funded at fairly significant cost but one that offered highly individualised advice, guidance, and aftercare. That was until our funding ran out at the start of 2020... An incredibly generous donation from the Tollcross Community Centre Management Committee, the board overseeing the community centre in which we often hold out monthly board meetings, has temporarily safeguarded our organisation for three further months. With a range of funds recently made available through the Scottish Government, Martin Lewis, and Neighbourly we've applied for financial aid to keep our work going for the duration of this crisis, with several larger funding applications placed to other funding bodies. We should know by summer whether any of these applications have been successful.

Though I am the only worker (a part-time one at that) with T.C.A.N., we are fortunate enough to receive support from two volunteers - one is a former foodbank user whilst the other is a retired school music teacher. Our Board of Trustees comprises both working

class and middle class members, all of whom have significant experience in community-based organisations - several specifically as community workers. Our broader work has included running political education events around the 2017 U.K. General Election and the impact Brexit may have for European citizens, as well as an annual Christmas Lights event that brings together community and school choirs and orchestras. The relationships we've fostered with our regular attendees have allowed us to provide vital assistance with understanding medical letters and signpost towards further support around specific issues, whilst others simply join us for a coffee and a chat on a weekly basis. The Hub, we've been informed, has been a fixture in the lives of our regulars. Indeed, the fruit we try to provide during the Hub is often the only fresh produce attendees have access to each week. In my time with the organisation we've endeavoured to establish a more family-friendly space through the temporary hiring of a Play Worker, purchasing colouring sheets and children's books (generally Peppa Pig or Curtis the Bear), as well as encouraging a dog-friendly space where attendees can spend time in company, sheltered, and safe off the streets. One dog, a Staffie named Cooper, has become our unofficial mascot, featuring frequently in our social media posts and serving as the group icon in our Volunteer WhatsApp Group.

## Covid-19 Outbreak and a Call to Action

As the Covid-19 virus spread throughout much of Europe, North America, and Asia, and more recently reached the African and Latin American continents, businesses waited for governments to instruct them to cease operations in order to access their insurance payments, many individuals and families struggled to purchase essential food and hygiene items, and, gradually, community organisations in the adult education, youth work, and community development sectors were forced to suspend their activities in order to slow spread of the virus. With the Community Hub partnership no longer able to provide the social space many

local people have come to depend upon for regular social contact, and guidelines banning us from making tea and coffee for folk in the Hub, the nature and dynamic of our work was rapidly forced to change. Guidelines issued by the coordinators of our partner's foodbank network, the Edinburgh Food Project, led to a one-in-one-out policy at the foodbank space - one which Central Church kindly provide for us. Everyone wishing to access urgent food support therefore has had to queue up outside the venue - an act that I fear may have made the policy around entry to the venue redundant as 'social distancing' (or rather 'physical distancing') is difficult to achieve whilst stood on a fairly busy street corner.

My usual role within the Hub therefore shifted from facilitator and coordinator, and instead for the first week in our history, I stood outside for the two hour period catching up with our regulars, comforting those accessing a foodbank for the first time, and offering the guidance we previously sought to provide in a more casual and relaxed setting. Adhering to U.K. Government, Scottish Government, National Health Service, and City of Edinburgh guidance, both of T.C.A.N.'s regular volunteers, who have been with us for between eight months to two years, both faced the need to self-isolate. One of them has several long term underlying health issues; whilst the other falls within the age category who were advised to limit social contact as much as possible. In this time of crisis, the chair of our organisation was kind enough to donate her time to the Hub, assisting the Tollcross Foodbank team inside the venue, though given her own professional work in mediation, this was never a sustainable approach to practice. The Covid-19 outbreak threatened our capacity to authentically support those in dire need, and consequently a call of support was issued via our social media channels.

## Community Response

As one would expect, those already living in some of the most

precarious positions within contemporary British society faced greatly exacerbated difficulties in navigating their survival as traditional support mechanisms closed down, encouraged staff to work from home, or for all intents and purposes ceased to operate. One regular Hub attendee arrived on the first morning after the lockdown with a black eye and bruised ribs having been attacked over his chosen rough sleeping spot. Another two men advised me that they were now sleeping in a skip close to a large chain pub in the city centre as the ventilation shafts blasts heat over the container every ten minutes, helping keep them warm during the night. I was informed that many of Edinburgh's homeless folk were experiencing rapidly increasing difficulties in finding safe locations to sleep as temporary accomodations and hostels, as well as access points, were drastically overcrowded. Whilst a handful of hotels in London began to offer free-of-charge overnight stays to those rough sleeping, no such offers have become public in Edinburgh at the time of writing. In my role as Development Worker I issued an email to as many hotels, hostels, and other accommodations asking whether they intended to or would consider following suit. I sent a similar message to many charities and community-run initiatives asking whether they would continue to provide support, community meals, or other assistance during this period; yet some two weeks on since that email, I've had no responses. In addition to emailing businesses, I tried connecting with the range of emergent local Facebook Groups, including Coronavirus Volunteering Edinburgh and Coronavirus Action Group - the former being the final space in which I posted this call to action in relation to our Community Hub. At the time of posting, the group contained just over seven-and-a-half thousand members which has continued to rise, with many members looking for ways to offer aid to those in more precarious positions than they were - including offers of data handling and administration support from those facing sustained periods of quarantining or isolation.

For the most part, well intended members offered assistance to

those in their immediate vicinity - supported through the division of the Facebook Group divided into hyperlocalised units organised by postcode. Suggestions of dog walking, pet-sitting, and even online lessons and entertainment for children facing lengthy periods out of school were posted on a daily basis. Eventually, given the obvious legal challenges those coordinating large scale community organisations may run into if deemed to be directing volunteers rather than just providing a space for connections, coordination of the group was handed over to Volunteer Edinburgh, an organisation with circa fifty years experience in supporting folk into volunteer positions. Social and emotional support amongst group members was clear, though the combination of suggested social distancing, self-isolation, and the scarcity of many essential resources impacted the precise acts of support some individuals could take. Furthermore, the numerous posts made to the Facebook Group and subsequent wealth of notifications Facebook Users would therefore receive at times made it challenging to identify and respond to the diversity of requests for help and offers of support, though those that dedicated their time to checking back frequently and responding to posts are to be commended.

As with many other posts to the Coronavirus Volunteering Edinburgh Facebook Group, support for the work we've been undertaking at the Community Hub was clear. Amongst those that responded to the T.C.A.N. post was a reporter for S.T.V. News who asked to interview me about our work at the Community Hub, as well as several offers of in-person support at the Hub. Grateful for the opportunity to publicise T.C.A.N.'s work and to encourage people to continue donating to our foodbank partner if they could, I asked that the reporter attend our next session on the morning of Thursday 26th March 2020. This would offer a chance to hear directly from those among the most severely affected by the virus outbreak and subsequent closure of many vital support services in the education, housing, and care sectors - the results of which would be felt throughout Edinburgh and far beyond.

Unfortunately, staffing issues and workplace guidelines meant the interview was conducted via Skype, however, I was able to film a brief statement made by one of the two aforementioned folk sleeping in an industrial skip. With his permission, that statement is included below. We thank Mark for his willingness to publicise his situation and share his experience.

"When I've gone to the homeless accommodation team, I've been turned away with no accomodation for a week, despite turning up on time [for my appointments]. I've done all I can do and was told to do, yet I have nowhere to stay. I've had warnings from the police that I could face a fine or even jail if I'm out on the street for other reasons than to find food or accomodation, so I wonder what will happen to the homeless like me..."

Other issues of deep concern to those of us present at the Community Hub are the risks many people, though primarily women, may now face as they're forced to self-isolate in the company of abusive partners; as well as the potential loss of bodily autonomy for those unable to access free contraception when local medical centres are closed to walk-in patients. As the quote from Mark and the stories we've heard from many others demonstrate, many folk enduring periods of rough sleeping or unstable tenancies are terrified for their safety and already precarious financial situation with the proposed threat of fines for those caught on the streets for sustained periods of time or seen in groups. At this time, we would encourage all to share several of the most important support lines for those facing dangerous and even violent situations including the LGBT Helpline (0300 123 2523); Scotland's 24 hour Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline (0800 027 1234); Shelter Scotland's housing advice helpline (0808 800 4444); and the numerous local helplines local to where you are (e.g. the Streetwork Helpline in Edinburgh on 0808 178 2323). When the U.K. Government has failed to enact an appropriate lockdown or quarantining response, instead encouraging a 'herd

immunity' that would place many of those with underlying health conditions at risk, please take it upon yourself to support those you know or believe to be in difficult circumstances. The government has failed to protect us, so we must take it upon ourselves to care for each other.

## Conclusions: The Lessons Learnt

What's become clear to me during this period of crisis is that many folk are ready - and willing - to support community initiatives despite their own anxieties. It's something I've both witnessed and been a part of on many occasions during this past decade of Conservative-led austerity in the U.K., ranging from demonstrations and protests at a moment's notice through to mutual aid and practical support at individual, community, and organisational level. Locally to me in north Edinburgh, this has recently included the North Edinburgh #SaveOurService campaign which sought to challenge the drastic cuts made to long established and seemingly vital organisations, as well as incredible support offered by organisations such as Low Income Families Together (L.I.F.T.) for local lone parents and other marginalised families. Where I believe the frustrations lie is in the difficulties most people face in knowing how to enact that desire for support. This was demonstrated through more than fifty positive reactions to a post I made in the aforementioned Facebook Group on behalf of T.C.A.N. requesting support in identifying which services would continue, albeit often with amended provision, in the immediate weeks of the U.K. Government demanded lockdowns, compared to just five comments of specific advice around ongoing support during this period and a further offer of furniture. Some days later three women contacted me, offering their time at the Community Hub, something for which we at T.C.A.N. will long be grateful to them for.

The desire to help is clear, yet the recommendations of self-isolation and minimal social contact could deter many from

engaging in frontline service provision. Even accounting for that well-advised caution, the biggest barrier remains resources. Whilst the three folk that contacted me through the website and email address could donate their time and presence to support local people, the family that runs a local cafe called La Viola were kind enough to donate tea and coffee to those lined up outside the foodbank - an act that is particularly appreciated after a multinational coffee chain located just a few shops further down the street charged their normal full-price. That this local business was willing to support us despite their own clear concerns about the survival of their business when a multi-million pound store would not demonstrate a kindness is difficult to understand. As this crisis continues, it's becoming worryingly clear that the U.K. Government will continue to support insurance companies at the expense of protecting workers, their income, and their jobs. Even in instances where money has been allocated by the U.K. or Scottish governments to provide urgent accommodation for rough sleepers, the money is being used to purchase these spaces - as councils U.K.- wide already do for Bed & Breakfast rooms to serve as temporary accommodations. Organisations with the means to have generally not opted to showcase their understanding of social responsibility by donating their time and resources to supporting the survival of our communities.

There have been some exceptions locally with the Edinburgh Gin Company turning their production from their global brand of alcohol to producing free hand sanitisers for local charities - something we at T.C.A.N. have requested to be part of - however, one of the most remarkable efforts during this period of struggle has been that of the Living Rent Campaign. Despite promises from the Scottish Government to support 'mortgage holidays' as had been witnessed in other crisis-hit nations such as Italy, these measures failed to prevent evictions that would mean more folk facing life on the street like Mark. Whilst the Edinburgh Coronavirus Crisis Accommodation Facebook Group has emerged, many of those

we work with at T.C.A.N. do not own a mobile phone and now, with the public libraries closed, no longer have internet access, and, even if they did, no one should be forced out of their home. Living Rent's success in pressuring the Scottish Government to implement a six month evictions ban in the private rental sector after delivering a 15,000 strong petition in an act that protects some 15% of the Scottish population, is therefore, to date, one of the greatest victories for the Scottish working class in many years.

In addition to the thousands who have died as a result of contracting the virus, many brave people have already lost their lives in this struggle to contain it - among them Dr Shirin Rouhani in Iran who continued to treat patients whilst on an I.V. drip and Father Giuseppe Beradelli, a priest in Casnigo (Italy) who died after giving his respirator to a young patient struggling with the coronavirus. Earlier this week thousands throughout the U.K. demonstrated their appreciation for those working in the N.H.S. through a moment of clapping and bell-ringing. We at the Tollcross Community Action Network may only be doing our small bit with the means we have and for a very local community, but every organisation like ours, every community campaign, and every mutual aid group plays their part. Please continue to support and show solidarity with your local groups, charities, and workers however you can, with whatever resources and knowledge you may have access to. Thank you, and keep yourselves and those around you safe during this time of strife.

With love and solidarity,
Luke Campbell
Development Worker, Tollcross Community Action Network

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If anyone would like to lend their time as a volunteer, support the Tollcross Community Action Network financially, or may be able to offer any other kind of assistance - including any manner of partnerships - please get in touch at: contacTCAN@gmail.com

# Social Crisis Mental Crisis Working Group

# Mental Health Care: Mutual Aid for Comrades in Crisis Conditions.

MADNESS < DEPRESSION < MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES < LONELINESS < BOREDOM ARE REVOLUTIONARY REFLEXES BOUND TO THE CAPITALIST ORDER.

SUFFER NO MORE! LEARN TO HARNESS AND FOCUS THESE MENTAL SPACES AND MODES OF LIVING, OPEN NEW HORIZONS FOR COMMUNIST LIFE.

1. DREAMING HELPS. IF YOU ARE UPSET, LOW, SCARED OR BORED - TAKE A NAP AND SLEEP ON IT. ENTERING DREAM LANDSCAPES WILL HELP YOU PROCESS YOUR PAINFUL THOUGHTS AND YOU WILL WAKE UP IN A DIFFERENT PLACE, HEAD-SPACE AND TIME. CAPITALISM STEALS YOUR FUCKING DREAMS.

2. WATER IS SOOTHING. IF YOU CAN TAKE A LONG BATH OR SHOWER OR SWIM AND LET GO OF YOUR FEARS. WASH OFF ALL THE SHITE THAT CAPTALISM HAS THROWN AT YOU THEN WATCH IT DRAIN AWAY.

3. TALK TO YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND COMRADES (EVEN IF THEY ARE DRIVING YOU UP THE WALL, OR ARE PART OF YOUR PROBLEMS). MENTAL TRAUMA AND SUFFERING THOUGH PRIMARILY EXPERIENCED INDIVIDUALLY (AND PATHOLOGISED AS SUCH BY PSYCHIATRY) ARE SOCIAL, AND ARE THE RESULT

OF A CAPITALIST ECONOMIC SYSTEM THAT IS CONTINGENT ON THE PERPETUATION OF MASS IMMISERATION. DIVE INTO YOUR PAIN, CONFRONT IT. COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR LOVED ONES EVEN IF THEY ARE PISSING YOU OFF.

**4.** WORK AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE. WE ALL NEED MONEY TO LIVE AS THINGS STAND. IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES YOU ARE LEGALLY ENTITLED TO RECEIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE STINKING STATE. THERE IS MORE THAN ENOUGH MONEY TO GO ROUND. IF YOU HAVE BEEN RECENTLY SACKED YOU CAN CLAIM WELFARE. THERE IS NO SHAME IN CLAIMING WELFARE -- ANYONE WHO SAYS THERE IS SHOULD FUCK RIGHT OFF AND SHUT UP. CRIME AND THEFT ARE ALSO GOOD OPTIONS AS IS ASKING OR DEMANDING THAT PEOPLE SHARE RESOURCES. ALL THE BETTER EN MASSE. BREAKING THE LAW IS GREAT FOR YOUR MENTAL WELL BEING. IF YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE WORK STOP IMMEDIATELY AND DON'T FEEL GUILTY AT ALL - LOOK AT ALL YOUR OPTIONS THROUGH A PLEASURE PRISM. FUCK WORK TO ETERNITY.

**5.** DRUGS. THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF DRUGS TO HELP DEAL WITH CHALLENGING HEAD SPACES AND SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS. DRUGS ARE COMPOUNDS OF CHEMICALS. SOME COMPOUNDS ARE LEGAL AND ADVOCATED BY THE PSYCHIATRIC INDUSTRY. THEY MAY HELP BUT READ UP WELL BEFORE YOU ACCEPT A COURSE OF MEDICATION AND TRY NOT TO BE PALMED OFF WITH CHEAP AND NASTY PHARMACEUTICALS AS THESE WILL REALLY FUCK YOU UP. OTHER COMPOUNDS OF CHEMICALS ARE CLASSIFIED AS ILLEGAL. THEY MAY ALSO HELP YOU COPE WITH DIFFICULT MOODS AND REACTIONS INDUCED BY THE CAPITALIST ORDER. EXPERIMENT CAREFULLY, CHOOSE HIGH GRADE DRUGS FOR SAFETY AND BE CAREFUL WITH DOSING. TAKE DRUGS WITH OTHERS, IT'S FUN. (DO IT VIA THE INTERNET

IF YOU NEED TO.) DRUGS ARE SOCIAL OR SHOULD BE. IGNORE ALL DRUG MORALISTS THEY ARE WRONG, LIBERAL, AND BORING.

**6.** ARE YOU HOME MORE THAN USUAL AND ISOLATED WITH CABIN FEVER? STAY AS SOCIAL AS YOU CAN BE. PHONE YOUR FRIENDS AND COMRADES EVEN IF YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT. ORGANISE MEETINGS TO DISCUSS TOGETHER HOW TO RESPOND, COLLECTIVELY, TO THE CRISIS. COME UP WITH DEMANDS AND PLANS WITH YOUR COMRADES. PHONE YOUR PALS AND CHAT SHIT. SHARE STUFF STAY SOCIAL TALK THINGS THROUGH AS MANY TIMES AS YOU NEED TO. DO THE STUFF YOU HAVE BEEN PUTTING OFF FOR YEARS LIKE CLEANING EVERYTHING IN YOUR HOME (IF YOU HAVE ONE), SORTING OUT YOUR HARD DRIVE, WRITING TO FAMILY MEMBERS AND OLD FRIENDS OR TELLING PEOPLE THEY ARE CUNTS. WHATEVER IT TAKES KEEP MOVING AND DON'T DWELL ON YOUR FOUR WALLS. SCALE RIGHT OUT OF NORMAL LIFE AND TIME -- LOOK AT YOUR LIFE FROM AFAR THEN MAKE LOADS OF CHANGES OR TWEAKS. DON'T BE SCARED BY RUPTURES. JOIN GROUPS, UNIONS AND STAY SOCIAL.

**7.** DO YOU NOW HAVE WAY TOO MUCH TIME ON YOUR HANDS? ONLY ONE THING TO DO. LET GO OF TIME. JUST LET IT GO AND STOP BEATING YOURSELF WITH MINUTES, HOURS AND WEEKS. IGNORE THE NAGGING GUILT OF PRODUCTIVITY. SIGN ON. SIGN OFF. SMASH ALL CLOCKS. THEN INSTEAD OF ALLOWING INCREMENTS OF MEASURE TO REGULATE WHAT YOU DO, JUST DO WHAT YOU FEEL LIKE. TRY MAKING ART, WRITING, READING, THINKING WITHOUT CONSTRAINT, MAKE DEMANDS, SING THE INTERNATIONALE. BUILD REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATIONS AND MAKE THE CHANGES WE ALL NEED TO THE SOCIAL ORDER.

**8.** DANCING, WANKING AND SHAGGING ARE FREE AND MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD. DON'T FORGET!

**9.** IF YOU CAN'T SLEEP EAT LOTS OF STARCHY FOODS LIKE BREAD, PASTA AND RICE. WHITE SUGAR IS FUCKING EVIL, AVOID IT IF POSSIBLE. TRY OTHER SWEETENERS. CHOCOLATE IS A GREAT FORM OF MEDICATION. CHILLI GETS YOU HIGH. NEVER WORRY ABOUT YOUR WEIGHT OR THE FORM YOUR BODY HAS TAKEN. IGNORE BODY FASCISTS, NEVER LET THEM GET TO YOU AND LAUGH AT THEIR GROSS SELF-MADE PRISONS, THEIR OBSCENE ADVERTS AND ROTTEN HOLLOW DREAMS. TOGETHER WE WILL SMASH THE COMMODITY.

**10.** SOLIDARITY IS NOT AN ABSTRACT CONCEPT. IT IS SOMETHING THAT WE ALL MUST PRACTICE AND SOMETHING THAT WE ALL MUST COLLECTIVELY STRUGGLE FOR EVERY DAMN DAY. IT SHOULD INFORM ALL THAT WE DO, AND ALL THAT WE DREAM OF AND HOW WE RELATE TO EACH OTHER. TRY BEING KIND INSTEAD OF COMPETITIVE. TRY MUTUAL AID INSTEAD OF HOARDING. SOLIDARITY WILL END CAPITALISM IF IT BECOMES COLLECTIVE PRAXIS. COMMUNISM WILL ONLY BE FORMED THROUGH COLLECTIVE SOLIDARITY WHICH WILL IMPROVE EVERYONE'S MENTAL HEATH.

**11.** NEVER FORGET IT'S SICK TO BE SICK. WEAPONISE YOUR ILLNESS AND LISTEN TO ITS DEMANDS. TAKE PRIDE IN WHAT IS LABELLED AS DEFORMITY AND KNOW THE REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL IN ALL THAT IS DISABLED. CAPITALISM IS THE ILLNESS COMMUNISM IS THE CURE.

Image by Stevie Rankin

# Old leather

Chris Hubble

My feet are cold damp actually
my shoes are wearing thin sole
ground down I can count 6 holes
at the moment some are trickier
to spot I have already replaced
the laces three times and the
threading is beginning to fray
again I often have the temptation
to pull it clean out

from where you're
standing they're good
shoes clean polished
even nice leather sturdy

you can tell a lot by
looking at someone's shoes
my feet are very cold

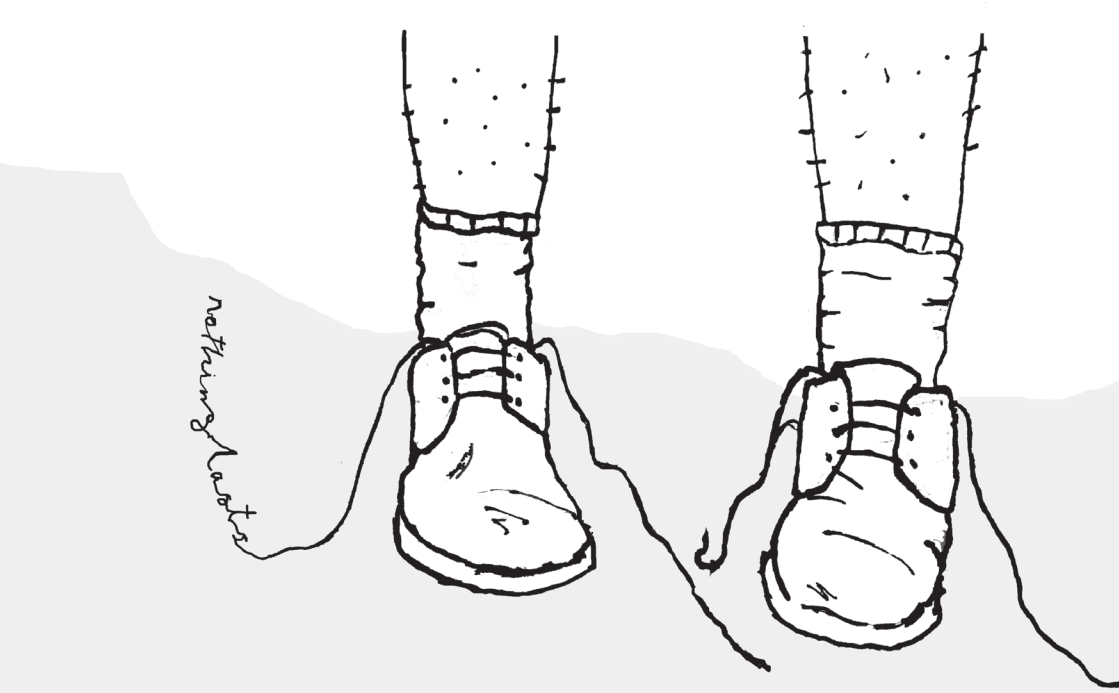



Image by Stevie Rankin

# A Personal Account of Precarity, Class and Race

Sam Siva

I moved to London when I was seven years old. My family is a product of the British Empire, covering three different continents and coming together on the small island of Jamaica, in the Caribbean sea. We moved because parents believed there would be more opportunities and better jobs in the UK, the myth sold to people from developing countries across the world. So we came to London and my parents, both university educated journalists in Jamaica went to job interviews where their qualifications and experience was seen as less because they were from a "third-world" country ("You have a lot of experience, but what about in British Journalism?"). The careers they had worked hard to build came to naught when they arrived in the Motherland.

At my university most students were romanticising poverty by pretending they were chavs and blundering when asked what class they fell into. Personally, this has always been a difficult question that can't be answered easily. Class worked very

differently in Jamaica and the opportunities my parents had are very different from those available in the UK. In Jamaica, massive education reforms introduced in 1972 under a democratic socialist government saw literacy rate increase to 85% by the end of the decade. This is substantial because under colonial rule education did not reach most Jamaicans. In the late 1800s schools like Kingston College, Jamaica College and other secondary schools which would come to be known as "traditional schools" in Jamaica catered to the light-skinned elite. For darker-skinned and poorer people, churches offered rudimentary education. With an elitist curriculum, the limited availability of schools emphasised the intense colonial class divisions. Primary education was government run and therefore reproduced the British Empire curriculum which was irrelevant to most students, especially if they could not afford to attend the private secondary education, let alone universities in Britain. In 1943, fewer than 1 percent of black Jamaicans and only 9 percent of the mixed raced Jamaicans attended secondary school.

My parents grew up at a time when education and literacy were highly valued and emphasised by the Jamaican state and were both able to benefit from free secondary and higher education. My mum in particular came from a low-income background where both her parents did not attend secondary schools. She and her brothers went on to work in white-collar positions due to these governmental policies. Despite the "skilled" careers my parents entered into, neither came from wealth nor possessed assets. When they arrived in the UK, they both initially were able to continue professional employment but when the 2008 crash occurred my mum was made redundant and my dad's contract was not renewed. He was the only person of colour at the office.

In discussions with friends of colour and Marxist-leaning mates we often wonder about how much of class identity is tied up with whiteness. Even in Jamaica, until recently class was closely tied

to colourism and inheritances of colonial racism. Moving to the UK and multi-cultural London, both my parents have experienced systemic and implicit racism in their employment. Since 2008 my dad has worked precarious jobs in Amazon warehouses, as a Morrisons cashier, history and chess tutoring, catering and the like. My employment history has more in common with his at the tail end of his working life. My mother has been mostly sheltered working for the Jamaican government, however most of the staff are women whose husbands are in similar position as my father. On top of this, due to working for the government her job is wrapped up in the politics of whoever is the ruling party at a given time.

Regardless of how much money my family earned, we sent money to our family back in Jamaica. This is something I share with other friends of colour, we support our parents or extended families who despite their experience or qualifications might be struggling to find stable work. Success is not as individualised for a lot of non-western people, there is an expectation and duty to support the wider community that raised you. This is both a great and burdensome thing, the weight of pressure to achieve and excel when the odds are against you is heavy. When the majority of your teachers, lecturers, classmates or co-workers are white, when your way of speaking is considered passionate and emotional, when you don't know the canon or feel anxious being the only brown face in a room – surviving academia or a career in a company of whatever sort feels like a mission in itself. Even if we adopt the codes of our middle class peers at university we still are seen as other, surprisingly bright, centre of attention at any mention of race. As you move out of employment considered "low-skilled" (working class) into "high-skilled" jobs (middle-class) you're often one of two people of colour at a company. Usually in higher education and in employment, people of colour are not supported or understood, we have to take on the extra labour of being "non-threatening", often sit through micro-aggressions and take up less space. We have to adapt our appearance and speech in order to be

seen as a viable candidate and that's if we can even make sense of the daunting bureaucratic system of applications or submissions. This is exhausting and part of why so many people of colour have mental health issues.

I want to say here that I don't think "high-skilled" jobs are superior. Often the most meaningful and fulfilling work is low-paying and undervalued. Carers, food growers, teachers, nurses, herbalists and so on are much more valuable and important for our societies. Compared to a lot of high-skilled computer based work in which you spend more time looking at abstract information on spreadsheets, or working 50 hour weeks dedicated to another start-up application, what we consider "proper" jobs seems nonsensical.

At a time when gig-economy jobs, zero-hour contracts, and freelancing are the norm, what class do I fall into as a migrant with a bachelors degree and an income of less than £1000 a month? What of the rest of us precarious workers who bend the rules in order to make ends meet? What of us depending on food banks or the generosity of communities whether they are bound by friendships, family relationships, heritage or religion?

There is an overlap with working class and poor people in our experiences of precarity, the fear that the few things keeping us afloat could be destroyed in the blink of an eye. My parents losing their jobs at the crash was that wake-up moment. On the other hand there is a constant paranoia and doubt in your sense of belonging, that regardless of your life experience someone will other you and make you feel unwelcome, This affects your ability to trust others and yourself, you doubt the work you do and whether that will be valued by others. How race intersects will class is complex and different for each individual and often neglecting one issue for the other fails to change anything for working class people of colour, white working class people and middle class people of colour. Migrants, racialised people, poor

people and working class people are falling through the cracks, now with another Conservative government in power this is the perfect time to draw on the knowledge and tactics of previous race and class movements. From co-operatives, to Pardner money draws, to chosen families – we need to think creatively and understand the interconnected nature of all our different identities from class to gender, race, ability and sexuality. We need to understand how class categories have changed in the 21st century and change the ways we organise and talk about oppression under Capitalism. Capitalism has been successful because it has adapted the colonial model of divide and rule and made us believe our struggles are separate. It cannot function without misogyny, racism, transphobia and class stratification. If we want to improve our lot we need to do a lot more listening to those whose voices have not been heard, we need to take what was good and powerful in movements that have passed, and we need to fight for liberation for all not just one.

In Nina Simone's rendition of "Mississippi Goddamn" she laments that Liberals keep telling black folks to wait for reforms to be introduced as being "too slow"! Let's stop waiting, let's come together and take what is ours.

# **Hardships. Freedoms. Knockbacks.**
John Bowden

He volunteered for the British army during World War 1, although more because it offered a means out of absolute poverty and starvation rather than in any real spirit of patriotism or belief in Britain's war effort. He was from Southern Ireland and along with thousands of his countrymen he volunteered his services to the British crown at a time when resistance to British rule in Ireland was increasing and feeding into an age old national resentment of British colonialism in Ireland. And yet, even though forced conscription in Ireland had been successfully resisted and there was no legal compulsion to "join up", thousands did so, some like my grandfather because of extreme poverty, and some because of a belief and hope that their contribution to Britain's war effort would eventually be rewarded with some degree of Home Rule, a limited and carefully circumscribed form of national autonomy. The latter group would be severely disappointed. Official records described him as homeless, although he was probably an itinerant labourer, like thousands of landless Irish forced to scour the country

for work and shelter; the outbreak of European war simply offered just another opportunity for pay and shelter, well at least at first. He survived the slaughter of the First World War and returned from it a more hardened and serious man. In fact, war and life in the trenches had shaped and defined his character irrevocably and given it a depth and strength that only the survival of terrible trauma can. There was now a silence about him that was impenetrable and stone-like, and it was accompanied by a single-minded determination to survive the material hardship of life back in Ireland. He married soon after his return, to a girl of gypsy origin, and whilst he had developed a martial loyalty to the British state, she held very deep Irish Republican beliefs and was outspoken in her hatred of British rule in Ireland. It made for a stormy and often violent relationship.

The 1920s in Ireland was a time of extreme violence, conflict and deep polarisation. In an attempt to suppress the IRA the British government unleashed the notorious "Black and Tans", a group of servicemen brutalised by their experience in the trenches of Europe during the "Great War". The Tans behaved with undisguised savagery on occasion and had an obvious mandate and licence to eradicate the IRA and those who supported them by whatever means necessary. For a long time entire regions of Ireland were torn and fractured by war and it left deep wounds and scars that would not heal for generations. Inevitably, my grandfather was caught up in this war and his reputation as a British army serviceman placed him in a hazardous position. Whilst he wanted only to focus on his growing family and occupation as a self-employed chimney sweep, the local unit of the IRA decided that his experience and expertise as a soldier should be used to train local recruits and familiarise them in the use of weapons. His initial refusals were met with violence and on one occasion he was kidnapped and almost drowned in a local river. Eventually his persuaders accepted that he was essentially a man of honour (albeit to what they considered a foreign enemy) who also enjoyed enormous respect in the local

Republican town and so they decided to let him be. He fathered seventeen children and was a strict, domineering presence in the home and often violent towards his wife, who was herself a very strong-willed and proud woman who refused to be subdued by him.

My mother was born in 1926 into an Ireland now nominally free and independent of British colonialism, although ruled by a Catholic theocracy that was as oppressive and domineering as the earlier occupiers. The authority of the Catholic Church in Southern Ireland in the decades following independence was total and in the small rural villages and towns the power of the parish priest was omniscient and all-pervading. As a small child my mother was sexually abused by the local priest, who would regularly order local women to bring their children to his house for "religious instruction", and despite the clear suspicion of the women about what was going on, no one dared to disobey his orders or voice their suspicion. The moral authority of the priests and church was absolute and frequently assumed the form of persecution. When my mother was seventeen years old she became pregnant to a local boy. There was absolutely no chance of her remaining in the district, and of course abortion was illegal, so she was encouraged to do what millions of dispossessed Irish had done for generations, immigrate to England. In fact, she chose Glasgow, which, along with London and Liverpool was a common entry route for the Irish into Britain.

In Glasgow she found accommodation in a cheap lodging house where she shared a room with another young Irish girl, whom she also worked alongside as a cleaner in wealthy homes. She then gave birth to a baby boy, driven by poverty and necessity she returned to work quickly, leaving the child in the daily care of another hopelessly innocent and inexperienced young Irish girl. Conditions in the lodging house were appalling and during the winter the whole place was damp and unheated and inevitably the baby fell ill. My mother and her two equally young and immature friends

cared as best they could for the child but its condition worsened and eventually it died. In a state of grief my mother returned to her family in Ireland.

After experiencing the freedom of life in a large British city like Glasgow, life back in a small Irish town dominated by poverty and the oppressive authority of the Catholic Church undoubtedly felt stifling, and her reputation as a "fallen woman" in the eyes of the locals and their priest must have eventually compelled and motivated her to leave again, although this time in a more planned and organised way. This time she headed for London where an older and favourite sister had already settled, and together they shared a flat in an Irish district of North London.

In London she took up cleaning jobs and her social life revolved around her sister and their joint excursions to pubs. Despite it being a time of post-war austerity in England, this period of her life was charaterised by a freedom that she had never experienced in the strict patriarchal and oppressive atmosphere of mostly rural Southern Ireland. However, she also experienced in London an anti-Irish racism that would blight her life and deeply damage her psychologically.

Those colonised by Britain, such as the Irish, were encouraged to migrate to the "Mother Country" following World War 2 to rebuild a country devastated and decimated by the war and were led to believe they were coming to a place where the streets were paved with gold; instead they were confronted by a racism epitomised by notices displayed in the windows of many lodging houses: "No blacks, dogs, or Irish allowed". In the wholly white working class areas of British cities like London, those perceived as "foreigners" were ostracised and often driven out by racist intimidation and violence, and such was the reason why most gravitated to ethnic minority districts and ghettos where at least their physical safety was ensured within communities populated by their own kind. In

London the immigrant Irish tended to congregate in parts of North London, and initially that is where my mother settled.

"Hardship has Tempered me and Turned my Mind to Steel"

The situation with my parole remains bizarrely uncertain, and it has now become obvious that it is not the Parole Board that is deciding matters but the Justice Ministry itself. Unfortunately my Judicial Review fell at the first hurdle. I had initial optimism when the first judge to consider my case decided there did appear to be a breach of proper legal procedure in the way the Justice Ministry refused to refer my case back to the Parole Board. The Board's supposed dissatisfaction had been put to rest when the hostel concerned informed the board that they were prepared to accept me for as long as was considered necessary.

The judge then gave the Justice Ministry 21 days to present a defence as to why I remained in prison still when there was clearly no real public protection justification for my continued imprisonment. 21 days later the Justice Ministry presented a "defence" claiming that it wasn't just the issue of a long-term hostel place that had influenced the Parole Board's decision to deny my release, but also my "aggressive anti-authority attitude", which it was unable to give any specific examples of in terms of breaches of discipline reports, etc. This was a blatant moving of the goalposts and unfortunately there was a different judge this time to consider the case, and who had obviously been "briefed" about my prison history and politicisation, swallowed the re-manufactured bullshit to justify my continued imprisonment and dismissed my action.

However, he was clearly uncomfortable with providing legal legitimacy for the dodgy reason used to keep me imprisoned, evidenced by him awarding the financial cost of the legal action against the Justice Ministry as well as wringing an agreement from them that my next parole hearing would be expedited and brought forward.

A couple of weeks later, the Parole Board requested all the relevant reports from the prison and probation service in preparation for what I assumed and hoped would be an imminent hearing. Then silence descended. Despite repeated inquiries from my lawyer to the Parole Board and Justice Ministry the silence prevailed, and then last week they finally broke their silence and claimed they were not prepared to set a date for my next parole hearing until the prison system provided them with a transcript of the judge's remarks from a prison protest trial in 1984 and my entire prison disciplinary record from 1980, neither of which the prison apparently has.

So now it seems they are digging deep into the past to try and excavate any reason to deny my release, and as I say, I am convinced it is the Justice Ministry that is behind this. So, I am now preparing for another parole knockback probably and then a return to the prison trenches, and trying to retain sufficient inner-strength to cope with that, which I am sure I will.

"Without the cold and desolation of winter, there could not be the warmth and splendour of spring. Hardship has tempered me and turned my mind to steel." Ho Chi Minh

Take Care, my Friends, and Stay Strong.

In solidarity, John Bowden, A5026DM, HMP Warren Hill, Hollesley, IP12 3BF

WORK
WANTED

# Killing the Dominant Male for a Revolutionary Wales

Heledd Williams

Enough of this classist, sexist, racist shit - how the Kurdish Freedom Movement overcomes the reproduction of oppression in their movement for the transformation of society.

The struggle in Rojava came sharply into my focus when a friend of mine was killed by a Turkish airstrike in Afrin. I had been working with her in the prison abolition movement and IWOC prisoner union in the year before she told me that she was going to fight in Rojava.

When she died it was an almighty shock, I was in North Wales at

the time. I felt somewhat alone in my grief for her although I was in contact with other friends mourning her loss. Her memorial was a completely worthy tribute to her and I felt like it embodied who she was to so many people that had organised with her and had her in their life as a friend.

About a year later I had come back to South Wales, I joined a Kurdish demonstration in Cardiff in solidarity with the Kurdish hunger strike. This strike was to break the isolation of the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. I knew Imam who was one of those that was on hunger strike as he had been active in the South Wales left for years, lending his solidarity to multiple campaigns and organising with the Freedom for Öcalan campaign himself. It was counter intuitive as an anarchist to devote those months to a campaign dedicated to a political leader, but I soon came to learn he represented peace in Kurdistan and freedom for all the Kurdish political prisoners in Turkey. At the time I was concerned for the well being of Imam and in some sense, before I understood its importance, breaking Abdullah Öcalan's isolation was a secondary thing - we just wanted Imam to live.

This was my entry point to working in solidarity with the Kurdish freedom movement. I met with a couple of other friends and we had a meeting to discuss how we can show our solidarity for Imam who was willing to go on hunger strike until death. His willingness to give his life for the good of humanity rang close to what Anna did, going halfway across the world to risk her life for justice and freedom. The hunger strike was won and a movement in solidarity with the Kurdish Freedom movement had been established in South Wales.

This solidarity work felt like a way to honor Anna's memory and the more I learnt from the Kurdish struggle, and the Kurdish women's freedom struggle in particular, I learnt how beautiful these ideas were that my friend felt were worth fighting and dying for. These

ideas have the power to transform our practice in Europe and Wales – starting at the centre of all revolutionary practice, which is within ourselves, from the individualistic to the collective and learning how to genuinely share power and prevent the repetitive, tired hierarchies that plague our organising and daily interactions.

The strength of conviction I feel from Anna, Imam and the hunger strikers in prison and out – and that of the martyrs of the Kurdish freedom movement has the power to inspire the next generation of us engaging in struggle. Not only does this movement reflect anarchist ideology but also the energy and passion of revolution too, from its rich history and continued struggle and success in mass mobilisations of people. These people gave everything for us, for the freedom of people they'd never met. If that doesn't make you feel loved in such a cruel world, I don't know what will.

How do we structure our groups, fighting for an equal society without perpetuating the oppressive systems of which we ourselves are products? Living in a highly individualistic, class based, patriarchal, and white supremacist world means that even as we call ourselves feminists, anti-racists, and allies to all those who suffer the brunt of capitalism, living this is another matter completely.

After over a decade involved in social movements in Wales, anti-austerity, anti-fascism, the Welsh language movement, anti-militarism etc – the recurring theme is that people find it really difficult to avoid being what they were brought up to be in this world. Without realising, sexist, classist, and ableist behaviour is rampant – and these are just from my experiences.

Being used as cannon fodder for direct action, having creepy men pass comments about my body, being left to do all the care work, admin work, and generally all the donkey work of any given campaign. Being patronised and belittled, laughed at while trying to

deliver workshops on intersectionality, being hit on again and again and having the way I express myself ridiculed constantly. Worst of all, having to defend women who are violated in leftist spaces by others in the movement only to be seen as a troublemaker.

Having started to feel hopeless about the way people treat each other I came across the ideas of Abdullah Öcalan. Not only are his ideas of Democratic Confederalism a roadmap to radical independence from capitalism and the state, but the tools developed by the Kurdish Freedom Movement could even save us from the most dangerous enemy in the Welsh revolution – ourselves. These tools consist of parallel women's structures, Tekmil and quotas and a system of "co-chairs".

Jineolojî – the science of women and life (jin meaning woman and life) is Öcalan's conception of a form of science opposed to the traditional positivist scientific method. Öcalan identifies monotheistic religions, capitalism, and the nation state as three roots of women's oppression.

Women's emancipation is so central to the Kurdish Freedom Movement because, according to Öcalan's theory, it is the first oppression that all others were built upon, and it must be addressed within ourselves first if we are to achieve something closer to true equity and democracy.

"During the Neolithic period a complete communal social order, so called "primitive socialism", was created around woman… It is this long-lasting order that shaped humanity's collective social consciousness; and it is our endless yearning to regain and immortalise this social order of equality and freedom that led to our construct of paradise". Abdullah Öcalan

The tools and structures of direct democracy in the Kurdish Freedom Movement are used to fight patriarchy within ourselves

and “kill the dominant male (in us)”. These are a sophisticated series of methods to move towards a real revolutionary praxis and I will outline a few of these methods in this article.

The first mechanism is the parallel women’s structures. To make sure patriarchal structures of domination are not replicated in the Kurdish Freedom Movement and in society in general – for every mixed “structure” there is a parallel women’s structure made of all the women that participate in the mixed structure. Here women have the space to discuss and hold the men to account and call out sexism and patriarchal behaviour. These women only structures even have the power to veto decisions taken in the mixed structure.

This applies from the military structures, to campaign structures like the Women’s Movement in Europe and also in the self administration structures of the societies in Bakur and Rojava. From running a school to collecting the rubbish, or deciding how local industry is run, the structures of self administration have a parallel women’s movement to keep its revolutionary integrity in check.

The second tool that is used both in the mixed and Women’s Movement is Tekmîl. This is the process of constructive criticism and self criticism. Accepting criticism can be very difficult, especially for us brought up in this neoliberal age of individualism, but it is essential for any healthy movement to deal with our conflict and to help us develop into better people and revolutionaries (it might feel jarring to use the word revolutionary but with the planet burning and the current state of the world I don’t think we can mince words any more about what we need).

In the Kurdish Freedom movement, a criticism is a gift that shows that your comrade really cares about you and your development. I heard a story from a friend about a group of fighters in the mountains in Kurdistan that wouldn’t criticize each other. Their

commander told them:

“Either you’re all perfect – or you’re not very good comrades if you can’t criticize each other.”

Tekmîl turns the concept of criticising from being an attack on the individual to being an act of comradeship and friendship. Having said this, it’s not as simple as just having it out with someone who’s annoyed you in a Tekmil. It’s an art, the aim is not to destroy someone, but to skillfully help them build themselves up.

For example, one wouldn’t store up people’s mistakes in their mind to shame them publicly at a Tekmîll, ideally you should tell the person when you deem it most appropriate, when the person would be most receptive to the criticism. The purpose of bringing it to Tekmil would be for others to learn from it, and perhaps if you feel the criticism hasn’t been taken on board and if they needed more encouragement to find a solution to the thing you want to criticise them about.

Another important feature is that when being criticised, you can’t “defend yourself” – doing so somewhat denies the other person’s reality and what’s important is that people are not thinking about being defensive – but really listening and learning from the criticism and seeing it as a gift.

Neither is it like a confession. If you self criticize, you and your comrades need to come up with solutions to your problem. Criticism should be solution-based. It’s no good doing it to apologise just so that you can carry on with this behaviour. I won’t be able to express the nuances of this method of evaluation here, but this is the rough idea.

The third method is the system of representative quotas and of co-chairs. All structures must have a quota of women participating

to make it a valid structure, and in addition to this there must be a male and female co-chair in any given structure. In areas of ethnic diversity, these quotas and the co-chair system also contain quotas to represent these minorities. There is also an emphasis on trying to reach an (informal) consensus wherever possible, since minorities in the traditional "voting" form of decision making can easily be outvoted and their opinions regarding language or anything else marginalised as a result.

Intersectionality has been a tool that has helped us to be able to understand one another's oppressions better – the tools from the Kurdish Freedom Movement guide us to strategically and systematically deal with the oppressions that plague our social movements. Capitalism uses us as a conduit to carry its poison into our everyday lives, damaging our relationships and dividing us from one another. According to the Kurdish Freedom Movement, 99% of the fight against the system is within ourselves – and so we must understand all the ways that capitalism and liberalism have filled us with destructive ideologies, and to root those out.

These ideas have given me hope for the future of the struggle in Wales for justice and freedom, I hope that these ideas provoke us to consider the need for change across the Welsh left and national liberation movement.

Across all the social movements I have been involved in, patriarchy is rife. From being dominated into silence at meetings to having men crack jokes and giggle when a woman was trying to deliver a workshop on intersectionality. From radical social centres refusing to deal with occurrences of sexual violence in their spaces to Socialist groups tolerating sexual predators. From collectives using women for all the invisible social reproduction work while the men get to do the visible, interesting and public facing work. From Mothers being excluded from everything because of a lack of commitment from others to constantly having older men

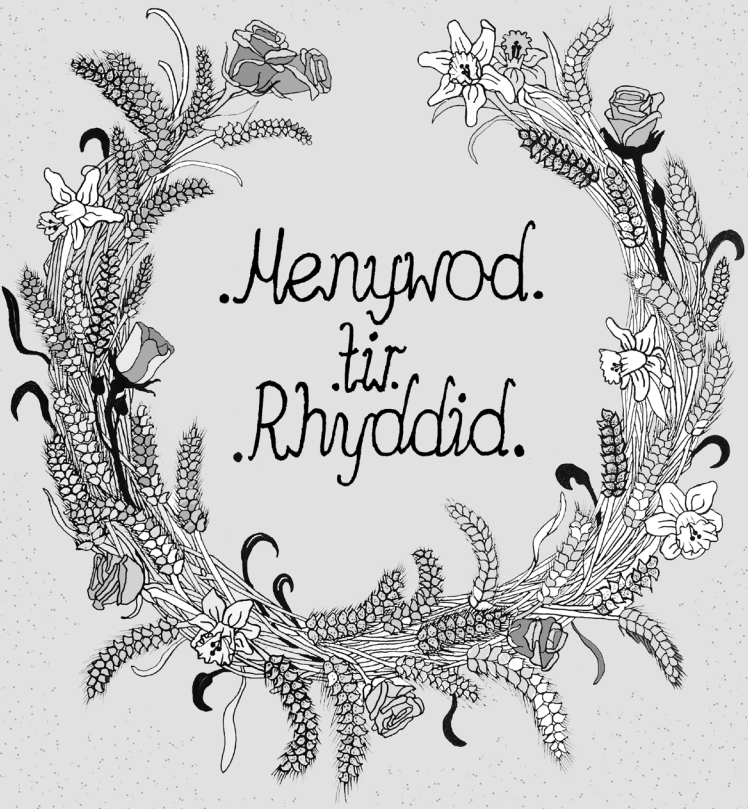
objectify, patronise, or ignore you when you interact with them in the movement – this can't go on.

After 800 years of colonisation, the structures of patriarchy in Wales have taken a stranglehold. I feel like "cymhleth y taeog" (the peasant complex) as a result of this assimilation and colonisation has driven us even further away from the "primitive socialism" that would be the natural society for us all. Hywel Dda's laws were arguably much more progressive; Wales was hardly ever a "Nation State" but communities that shared the same language and culture. I feel that colonisation accelerates patriarchy, exploitation, and oppression, and if we in Wales see Welsh independence within the paradigm of a de-colonial struggle, we have to struggle to decolonise ourselves and our collectives – especially given that as well as being colonised, some Welsh people have been enthusiastic colonisers and collaborated and benefited from the murderous British Empire.

I am aware that all theory (when in practice) has limitations. For example, these tools from the Kurdish struggle aren't perfect and within a western context might be limited. Patriarchy, sexuality, and gender work in a different way and are at different stages of development in our context. However from the history of the extreme repression and continuous attempts at genocide of the Kurds by the Turkish state and many other states, in the face of this struggle that must seem so insurmountable, this pressure has accelerated the development in these tools that mean that the Kurdish Freedom Movement have found ways to build a strong movement that's incomparable with anything in Europe at this moment. I feel like these tools could be very useful for challenging western paradigms and cultural patterns and the basic principle of "Killing the Dominant Male" is the same.

These methods of praxis have the potential to be an alternative to the toxic "call out culture" of social media, to really get to

grips with the issue of the reproduction of oppression in our organisations and movements. This is not just the nurturing out of oppressive behaviours. If a group does not represent the community adequately, it will not be considered a legitimate group by the movement – this method has teeth. One example is of an ecological group formed in a Kurdish city within the Turkish state – there were not enough women in the group so until the group has more equal representation, it would not be considered legitimate. We have so much to learn from the Kurdish Freedom Movement and the Revolution in Rojava. Our methods in many ways thus far have failed us, although we have had reactive wins in the struggle against austerity and the destruction of the planet in the last decade they haven't been massified or been translated to a joined up anti state anti capitalist vision. The high turnover and inaccessibility of our movements despite our best efforts I feel point to the need to consider new forms of organising, learning from the people who are actually doing it in adverse and difficult circumstances.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## Terry

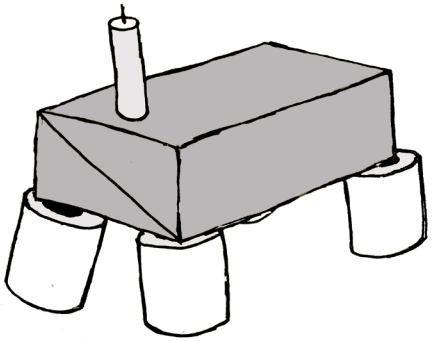
Jake Hawkey

The counsellor says Being the child of an alcoholic
can create confusions around love, death, and women.
Last night, I sat on the edge of my bed and wept.
Some claim my name from the Hebrew יַעֲקֹב־אֵל
transliterated into Latin script as Ya'aqov'el—May God
protect. As a kid, I wandered and watched the iron spit
a small pool on your FCUK t-shirt. I watched
you change. You weren't afraid to make them wait
and the club would often end in a good fight, wouldn't it?
One night, six beefy bouncers led you down an alleyway,
having had enough by then too.
The house lit up with calls,
Love sat aching, Dad drove to pick you up from the hospital.
Yes—I know why you stay out late, where all this begins, why
we need to be loved so ferociously. Sit here now, stay with me?

## Another Poem for Dad He Will Not Read

Jake Hawkey

I built a foal with four loo rolls, a shoebox
and a birthday candle for its silky neck. I build
it here again. I give it to you at parents' evening,
the teacher makes a presentation. You smile, nod,
put it in the bin as we leave. I'm a paperboy folded,
feeling the streets around us, pulling my weight.
You in the salt air of Blackpool, with steamy mother
in dancehalls, in church's brogues. Our shared taste
for motorhomes beyond our means, farther and farther.
We're selling my guitar when the internet is young,
making one hundred pounds and do I love you
wrapping our shipment like an Egyptian queen.
You cannot extract my money off the screen.
So embarrassed you are that I say let's send it anyway.



# Suicide Daughter

Zoe Naylor

I can't tell you where this story fits into class, patriarchy, or ableism, yet it is a story of all. I can't specify the oppressions or direct suffering caused by capitalism within it. What I can say is that it's nuanced and intersectional and the more political theory I read the more I don't really know where to fit or how to 'identify' class wise. Yet I know the nuance of it all is a thread I can't reach inside laced with trauma that triggers anger within me, in most of my relationships with men, and breaks my heart at every person I meet struggling with health needs that aren't being met due to orthodox medicine, social care and poverty. My life has had equal amounts of hardship and poverty and equal amounts of comfort and privilege. Like I said, I don't know where it fits but all I can do is tell this story without knowing exactly where it begins or where it ends.

I was born in Eccles, my mum was 27, a working-class Yorkshire lass. My dad freaked out and left and she had a little flat above

the doctors. My dad came back when I was born, apparently I was cute, and he decided to do the 'right thing' and stick around. He went and got a job. And then a mortgage. He knew computers. He was clever. He set himself up as an I.T. consultant when very few knew the inner workings of a technology that was about to dominant everyone's lives. He could charge a lot and he did. He made a decent living and we never saw him or knew him. Me and my sister were cared for by my mum pretty much single handedly, but with privilege. A secure house and an income. Apparently we were some form of new age Marxist radicals. We ate spaghetti bolognaise in Eccles when no one even knew what it was, (my babysitter told me years later). I'd play house at school and demand someone had to be the bailiff because we weren't allowed to answer the door at home for the refusal to pay poll tax. We were probably the privileged labour people I judge now. He was an adamant Marxist. My mum a hairdresser. I understand now we were the aspirational middle class.

At some point we moved houses to a more middle class suburbia and I realised later it was because if I went to big school in Eccles my probability of hard drug addiction and teenage pregnancy was, well, probable. My best mate I used to play out with has had at least 11 kids took off her due to neglect from addictions before she was 24. Though I did see on Facebook recently she's got some of her kids back and she seemed clean. She went to big school in Eccles. I hope she's OK.

Life was pretty comfortable. My mum did her hairdressing, dad earned good money. We went on holidays. We had these choices that I know some others don't. I acknowledge that.

Then Dad got ill and our comfort fell from us as quickly as my mum acquired it. He was suddenly home all the time, he was angry and pissed off. And I remember clearly not the incident that procured the thought, but the thought at about 11 that I never knew my

dad, here I was getting to know him and he wasn't really that nice a man. He was actually pretty scary over things that shouldn't really matter. I did go on to develop a close relationship with him, with a lot of love, but not without its fucked up-ness that my grief has took a thousand turns at dissecting every time its moved a different inch or re-decorated the scars on my heart.

It may have been a similar situation with my mum, as she got to know him too. I can't speak for her but I just know that around then, the consistent arguments started. That was until I was 13 and they sat me and my sister down and told us they were separating. My dad cried, I never saw him cry again. Gently that is. I saw him rage many times after that. My mum didn't say a word. But I saw her for 3 years after come down the stairs, wash the pots, and to hold back the tears pour a whiskey in her morning coffee when she thought no one was looking, before going to work. She would come home from work and sit in her car for sometimes hours listening to music before she entered the house. I watched her out the window. I know now this is how a woman holds it together. We learn very early on to hide it well. Though she never once said it I know she always loved him. For the rest of my life she told me I should never cry over a man, and yet that's what I spent most of my twenties doing. I don't bother now I'm in my thirties. I do her whiskey trick.

On their separation my dad made my mum remortgage the house and buy him out. We never had financial comfort again. And the comfort we did have were always normalised in some way that made us never quite make the direct correlation with my mum's bleeding hands covered in eczema from her long hours hairdressing.

He rented a house up the road. He was becoming progressively ill. He had polio as a child, and it wasn't till 6 years after his fatigue and chronic pain began he managed to diagnose himself and eventually get a doctor to believe him and work with him. Post Viral Fatigue

is now an accepted illness, it wasn't 10 years ago. There are now, a few academic papers, and books written on Post-Polio Syndrome. The bulk of it goes like this - The polio in the first instance kills of a majority of nerves. The nerves don't regenerate like other parts of the body. It's said that polio sufferers have type A personalities and work extremely hard to succeed because of their set-backs and often bullying in younger years. My dad had a splint and often talked about the day he hit the bully back. This work and life ethic puts a lot of strain on the remaining nerves and they die off slowly. Richard L Bruno in his book Post-Polio Syndrome uses the analogy of building a big house. As the work is so hard many of the builders drop out or quit, yet the same amount of work is needed to be done with the few remaining builders left, this is what happens to the remaining nerves. He suffered with nerve damage, fatigue, brain fog, chronic pain and a myriad of other symptoms that come with it. He ended up on sticks initially until he began losing the nerves in his legs, eventually got a manual wheelchair, and then through using his arms for his manual wheelchair he was about to get paralysis in both his legs and arms and needed an electric chair. He decided he wasn't going to stick around for that. Which is pretty much fair dos. His money was running out and the software programmes he was writing weren't really getting anywhere or in the same demand they were when he started. Now everyone did computers. He ended up in a council house in Wardley estate. He painted it all peach. And it wasn't till later when I was living in a caravan with peach curtains and they'd eat at me every morning I woke up to them did I realise why I hated peach so much.

My mum in the meantime continued working, re-mortgaging the house and paying interest only. The house we bought for 57 grand in the 90s we now owe 90 grand on and it's about to be repossessed. We've had lodgers and students to keep up our aspirational middle-class suburbia life for as long as I can remember. My mum can no longer do hairdressing because of her hands and we can only keep the house if we don't live in it and rent it out.

We recently procured my mum a fraudulent degree certificate. It couldn't have made her more happy. I don't agree in the slightest that this institutional certificate should matter, but I'm not going to argue with a woman whose worked so hard all her life and never complained to keep a roof over our heads. If it makes her feel she's finally got recognition for all her work and self education through college and night schools. If it makes her feel she has managed to achieve something that was denied to her because of class. Who am I to deny her that, I got a higher education because of her work and effort for us.

While Dad was still in his rented house becoming progressively worse, he was struggling to get a diagnosis, understand his illness. This bit is pretty blurry. Theres' a few events I have come to remember recently that were blocked out. He was basically having a mental breakdown without an understanding of what was happening to his body. He sat me and my sister down and told us he was probably going to kill himself. I answered saying I'll respect your choices and went back to college as normal as any other day. I don't remember that conversation affecting me much. But by then I was a fully trained adult woman. I never really got to be a teenager at home. Now I can say it was utter bullshit to put that on us at that age. Yet I learned early on with my dad's illness that his needs took precedence over everything. I learned that the more mature and responsible and adult I behaved, the more approval, love and praise I received. I learned that if any of us women in the house from being 13 years old were upset, had problems or emotional needs, we were told to get up and get on. We were told to go to work, do our studies, wash the pots, get on with the housework and that we were silly for feeling what we were feeling. So that's what we did, we worked, studied, did the housework and tended to my dad. All the time, year after year, having to put our needs back more and more for my dad's illness, but to be honest, I didn't even know what my needs were, never mind that they might matter. It's something I've had to re teach

myself over the years. It still takes me more energy to consciously choose not to respond to a man's physical and emotional needs and put myself first than it does to subconsciously and habitually respond to them. I still haven't had a meaningful relationship with a man that doesn't have a lot of physical and emotional pain that I have to tiptoe around. It's still the only place I know how to be loved. I've still never been supported to feel my emotional needs matter in a relationship. I wouldn't know how to do that, though I have acquired more than adequate coping mechanisms. But then, haven't we all.

He became angrier, more frustrated, more violent, more of a dick. But he was ill. He didn't kill himself that year. Though I discovered later through his diaries he did attempt it, but the rope snapped and he broke down and called someone up. That year he started to ask for help. Started to make it clear to people what was happening. Started asking his friends to help him with his shopping, getting out the house, going to watch the match. He knew he needed physical help and support. None of his friends really did make the effort and it was left mostly, to me, my mum, and my sister. I moved in that year. To be his 'carer'. To help with the housework, cooking, cleaning, shopping, whatever. I was there for his needs, but I was also a teenager, trying too hard to be a good adult. I took up space and the space you take as a 'carer' must be negligible. I didn't put his comb back in the right place. He put his hands round my neck and strangled me till I was nearly dead. I remember the tears streaming down my face, and the worst part of it, was not that I couldn't breathe, but not being able to make a sound, not being able to scream, not being able to tell him to stop. I feel he stole my voice away from me in that moment. And now when I think back to the relationship I had with him, I wish so much I had the voice to turn around and tell him when he was being an absolute cunt, and yet my learned behaviours, my conditioning to care, I consistently went back and used his illness as an excuse for his behaviour without saying a word. I ran out the house, red marks

and bruises all around my neck. I must have been in shock for a while. As I don't know what happened in the months following. I don't know the conversations my mum had with him, how we made up or if he even ever apologised. I don't actually know if it was ever mentioned again. It's all blocked. Its somewhere I can't reach. But I did care for him again and stay with him afterwards. I guess I had more fear by then, so was more careful at tidying up after myself. He'd always had a huge temper, and we learned how not to aggravate it. I wish now I hadn't tiptoed around it from fear, and had stood up to him more. The more I've been able to recall and unblock that memory, the more I realise how few minutes away he was from being on a murder charge, or burying my body for not putting the comb back.

I went to university in London, he moved into the peach council flat. I was consistently handing in mitigating circumstances for my work and jumping on the mega bus home to care for him. There was no spare room in the flat and I stayed on the couch. He would bang on the wall in the morning screaming for me to make his coffee. He was in an electric chair by then, that had taken him a long fight getting the NHS to provide it, even though he was losing his arms from pushing his manual chair. It was too big for his flat and damaged the skirting. This drove him mad. He was a perfectionist.

Post-Polio Syndrome is not a progressive illness. Technically it shouldn't be. If you can manage the energy expenditure, have the support around you to help, you can reduce and limit the nerve damage. But we live in a capitalist society, and without us affording a bungalow and private carers, social care doesn't quite do it, or doesn't do it at all. He would crawl on his hands and knees to make coffee if no one was around, was addicted to huge amounts of codeine and spending all his benefits on cocaine and other stimulants to be able to get the energy to get out the house. The care system meant that carers were unable to attend when he needed them, always coming when his brain fog and need to sleep in the

afternoon were strongest, and often never doing anything to his specifications. I get it, he was hard work and particular, I lived with the violent results of not getting that right, but if we are offering ill people care, we need to offer care that actually accommodates their needs. I doubt this service had anything to do with individual carers though, and is a result of the social care system that doesn't actually care. I mean most of those carers were overworked and underpaid and no doubt had their own lives full of difficulties and hardship making ends meet. It was why his argument was always if we had money this would be a different experience. It would. No doubt. I have since come to the conclusion though, no matter how ill you are, it is not an excuse to treat those around you that love you and care for you and are doing their absolute best, to the detriment of their own needs, like shit. I wish I could have stood up to him and told him that. I wish the patriarchy didn't make all that really normal too when I was growing up. And somewhere I ask for forgiveness from the men I have loved since for when I get triggered and go sick at them for all these tiny moments of patriarchal and paternal nuances that they don't even see.

In those years I learned about ableism before I knew the word existed. I pushed him everywhere in his wheelchair, most buildings that did have ramps meant you had to go the long way round. Most roads and steps were an incredible exercise of trust for him, as myself and some stranger would lift the whole of his 6 ft body and chair through inaccessible doorways with just a few too many steps. Watching the football was a well coordinated exercise as we had to find not only the accessible pubs but be there early enough to get a seat to be able to see with all those stood up, and make sure this didn't take more energy than he had by being hours early. A lot of places we just couldn't go. Gigs, he'd get an accessible box, and when I tried to stay positive and say we had the best seats in the house, he'd reply he wanted to be at the front with the people dancing. We felt the judgement of others when he would step out of his chair and get in his car and drive. He always said he wanted

to stand up and scream ‘it’s a miracle’ like the Life of Brian just to shut them up.

So far I’ve told you the things that fucked me up. But he wasn’t a monster. He was ill and upset, felt useless and hated it. My relationship with my dad was also very nourishing in other ways. He loved me, and was incredibly proud of me. And said it. Not that often but he did say it, though it was mostly done through a big man hand squeeze on my shoulders. The body speaks more clearly than words that are hard to voice. From a young age he gave me an incredible political education in Marxism, economics, social conditions and the manipulative language of the press. I once pulled out a newspaper spread of the life story of Che Guevara and took it home to him. He rewrote it all to demonstrate to me how the language used manipulated the story. He taught me that the working class educated themselves. State school was useful for life and society skills but our real education came from each other, from books, history, global political situations and a willingness to learn and ask questions. State school taught us how to cope in a fucked up world we have no choice in. He cared for me. Picked me up and dropped me off at work and did good ‘dad’ things. When my mates would refuse to walk home alone in the dark, or their parents insisted they got a taxi, should we get raped as weak women in the woods, my dad told me to walk home and never ever allowed that fear or attitude that we are unsafe and incapable to enter my mind. He never once allowed me to feel there was anything I couldn’t do. And I know this shaped the woman I am today (but full credit has to go to me mam). I do have fond memories with him, rolling his joints, getting him john smiths out the fridge, debating quantum physics, electromagnetism, and whether unions currently have any use for the working class, once I’d done his pots and cleaning of course. Listening to his shit jokes, sharing music, films and books are all memories blended in here. Life was a mixture of caring for him, learning from him and spending time with him in his low, lower and better moments,

navigating life and trying to find enjoyable and accessible things to do that made everything else a wee bit easier on him. I don't resent any of that. I'm glad I was able to share that with him.

It was the 28th of April 2008. At 10am he took thousands of grams of tamazepam, mixed in yogurt, and put a turkey bag over his head. You take the downers to stop the body producing the adrenalin to rip the bag of when the suffocation kicks in. His suicide was as thorough and researched as every other part of his life. His worst fear was waking up with liver or kidney damage still alive in hospital. He knew he was going to go, and go properly. The house was barricaded in a way, he knew exactly what time the carer would turn up, and that he would be dead by the time the police were called. He had cancelled his milk and papers that week. He left a note saying 'Do not resuscitate' with a smiley face. They illegally did anyway and probably made his death a bit more painful and unnecessarily longer. There was no doubt that he wanted to go, yet our pro-life medical community seem to continuously deny this, and assume people want to live no matter how dire their quality of life is. I was in my rented room on Holloway Road studying for my physiology exam. I was learning about cardiac arrest as my dad was suffering with a self inflicted one. The carers called me and asked if I would give permission to the police to break in. I did. I phoned my mum and told her he had killed himself. She said she had spoke to him that week and he was the happiest he sounded in ages that he couldn't have done. I told her that was why he was happy and to get my sister home from Liverpool. I had dye on my hair and I remember taking it off and blowing my hair completely normal just repeating to myself my dad's killed himself. I packed up my stuff, made sandwiches for the train and even packed herbs to take for grief. I kept phoning his phone. Everything was set to answer machine. He knew it would go like this, he planned it this way. He was found slumped over his table with a bag around his head, sealed with elastic bands. By his side, in his best shirt was two books on how to kill yourself, his passport, and suicide letters

for myself, my sister, my mum and his best mate. An untouched glass of champagne and in the C.D. Player – Alabama 3 – Ain't too sick to pray. A CD he bought with my mate the day before when she took him out to the Trafford Centre. She was the last person to see him and he picked up the yoghurts to mix his drugs in on the way home. Drugs he had been collecting from the doctors for some time until he had enough. He phoned everyone we knew that week. Everyone said he seemed really happy. My physiology teacher had told me when people commit suicide, they need energy. They don't do it at their lowest. If you're going to jump from a building you need the energy to climb up. I know it was his commitment and final plans to be going that gave him this energy and happiness. I will never begrudge him that. Like we should have the right to choose how and where we birth our children, we should have the right to choose how and when we die*. The last time I saw him, we had gone to Tatton park for the day. We couldn't go up the stairs as there were no lifts so walked around the garden. Then his electric wheelchair ran out of battery. We sat under a tree and he said 'look, my life's shit'. I agreed with him. I know now that was our goodbye, and that he needed to hear that from me. That I'd understand, in some way. His choices. He wrote my suicide letter that week, while I was sleeping on his couch.

For a long time I couldn't see past this event. I couldn't remember any of my life, relationships, memories before this. It was like I would look back and that day, to every detail, was all I could see, and nothing beyond it. Over time as my grief has changed, and affected a lot of my relationships, I have come to break down the relationship I had with him before he did it, as his primary carer as a teenager, and how that affected me. I honor his right to die, but I don't deny that he left a trail of destruction behind him. One where again my mum, and sister and I have had to pick up the pieces of my dad's needs. I hear all these increasing statistics about men and suicide. It's shit. But I don't hear about the carers, the families or the daughters and partners. I don't hear about the

people holding it all together when mental health, suicide, and disability is a normal part of their lives. I was at a party once and there were 4 women there who had all lost their dads to suicide. My heart whispers love to them and anyone else holding up in a similar situation, I think of you when others just see the suicide. I went to a group for survivors of suicide bereavement (SOBS) for a few weeks recently. It brought back all these other memories that had been blocked out about the inquest, the statements, the interviews. I hear each story has the same pattern of neglect from mental health services and social care. Each person appealing, fighting the inquest outcome that individualises the person's story and pain without the social context. I hear there's a lot of expensive payouts to families for neglect which would be better off paying the carers a living wage. It's only the middle class that get that though, those who can articulate themselves well and afford a decent lawyer. The working class are hardly even communicated to with regards to the inquest etc.

I don't know how to end this piece of writing. But then again, I guess it's a story that has never really had an ending for me. It's 11 years ago now, and I've watched my grief and understanding change by the year. I'd never commit suicide as I know the destruction it leaves in its path for those around, but I would never deny someone the right to die either if that was what they wanted. If we had the right to die, my dad could have been open and honest. It wouldn't have had to have been so meticulously planned and hidden. We would have been able to say our goodbyes in an open way. He would have been able to go in a less traumatizing and violent way. He would have been able to die in dignity and we would have had more acceptance around our grief. You bring up your grief is due to a suicide and people look at their feet. There was never anywhere to comfortably talk about it. I wish I found that group years ago. There were 12 around that time, there's up to 80 across the UK now.

Then again, if we had a medical system that valued patient autonomy my dad wouldn't have had to fight so hard for his diagnosis and care or his benefits. If we had a proper social care system that accommodated his needs, or we were rich enough for private care and a bungalow he wouldn't have ended up nearly paralysed. I don't live with what-ifs though. Just my baggage weighted with shit loads of anger at the patriarchy, shit loads of anger at social care, and orthodox medicine and a whole lot of sadness and grief I've never known how to not carry. It plays out in my relationships with men, and both my ability to care and my ability to stay incredibly detached with chronically ill or disabled people. When one of my friends recently became paralysed from the waist down with a spinal injury, I just couldn't go to see him, but I carry him in mind always and he has no idea that I do or why I haven't been round. Throughout all this, whether the baggage seems lighter, heavier, different from one day to the next, me, my mum and sister just carry on going to work, doing life, struggling to pay the mortgage and keep rooms rented all the while putting make up on. We know how to hold it together whether our stories have endings or not, or wherever they fit. We're good at that.

*We don't have the right to die in this country, though it's getting closer for the terminally ill to gain that right. It's a long way off for the chronically ill that are clear about how and when they want to go. Several people have took it to court only to be denied. Tony Nicklinson, living in a vegetative state with locked in syndrome and only able to communicate with his eyes, took it to High Court to ask for his right to die with the help of a doctor in 2012. It was denied and he starved himself and died a week later. Those with financial ability go to Dignitas in Switzerland and their families are often under investigation by the police on their return.

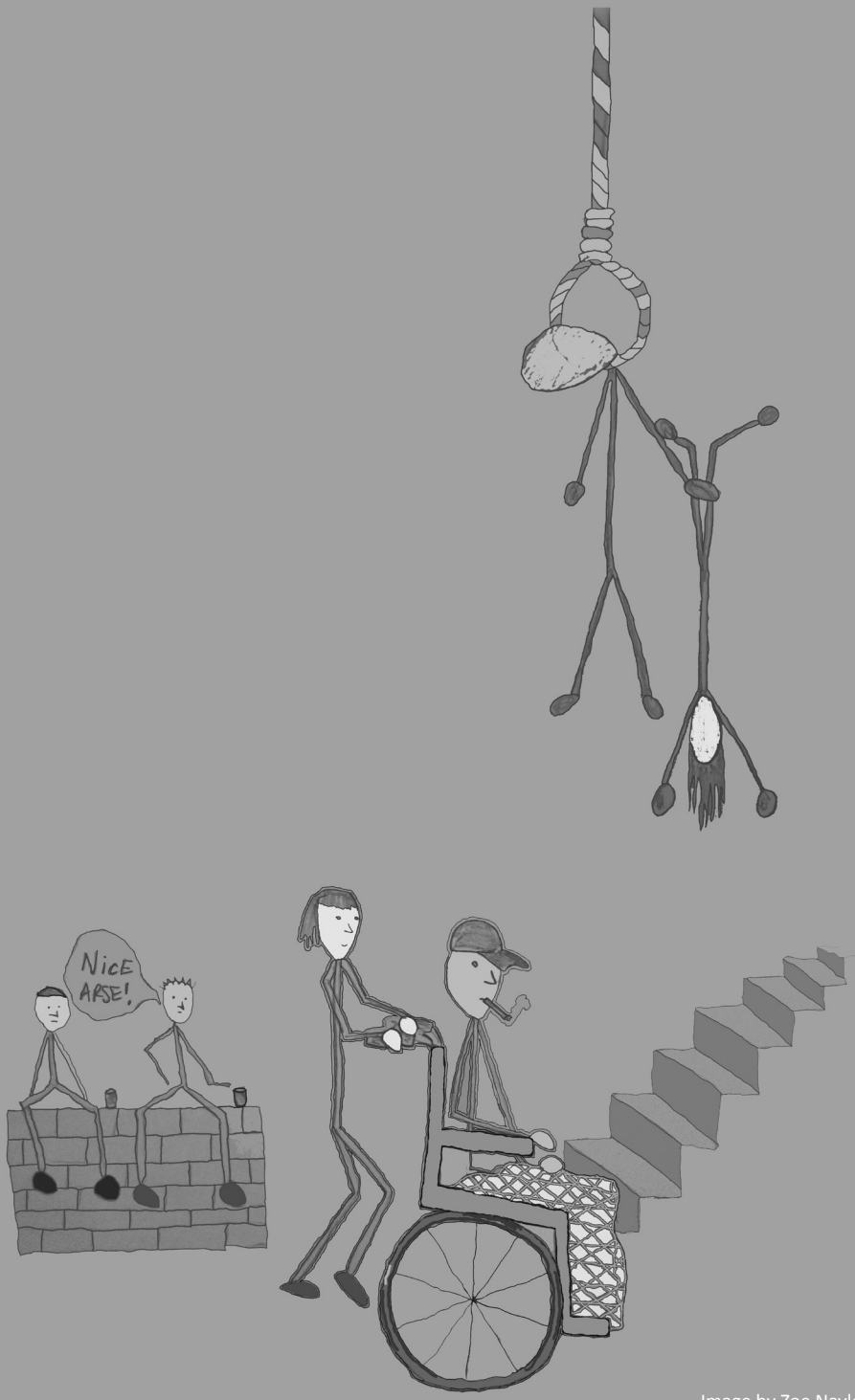



Image by Zoe Naylor

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# Code Switch

Hannah Batley

As and ts flick off my tongue.
Markers, to remind self where I'm from.
Dunt get me wrong, inflection slips like oil over tarmac.
Iridescent, hard to catch...unless the light catches the surface.

Purple. Orange. Yella. Blue.
We've got accents like a rainbow,
And words are like glue that stick to meaning,
memory.
Memory will say, remember.
Coz ya soul will mourn it.
It warned ya;
Like morning, it needs summet to get outta bed fo.
Needs the familiar
Before the chaos.
Or the chaos never stops.
Could spend your whole life searching,
For summet ya never lost.

# Matriculation

Max

Imagine not knowing that rich people are a thing or that middle class people exist. I can't properly remember how that felt but for the first 18 years of my life I had no idea, which is mental. And also, quite embarrassing. But mostly mental. Obviously, I'd seen rich people characters on TV, but I didn't quite believe they were real. Or maybe I just didn't think about it. I can't remember to be honest, but I do remember being shocked when I met rich people and then had to live in the same building as them (yeah imagine living next to rich people). And I remember specifically being overwhelmed when attending a ridiculously posh event called 'matriculation'.

I was naive. I had lived in a working-class bubble. A big town in Northumberland called Ashington which felt a bit like Willy Wonka's chocolate factory: 'You see, nobody ever goes in and nobody ever comes out'. At one point in time it was the largest coal mining village in the world (weird flex but ok). Now Asda is the biggest employer. Other big supermarket chains do exist (just not in Ashington). Northumberland is a beautiful county but Ashington is not like other parts of Northumberland. My high school's 5 A-C GCSE pass rate was fucking 40%. So, 60% of all children going to my school couldn't even get 5 GCSEs with a grade C or above. Basically, it was shit.

I am from a working-class background. I've lived in a council house, an ex-miners' house and also temporarily with my grandparents. But importantly I also grew up with a very loving and supportive family and a great group of friends (some right fucking nerds). These privileges are the reason I most likely made it into Durham University, probably the most prestigious Uni in the North (humble brag). I arrived on my first day so full of hope. In Ashington there was always a pressure to fit in. To not look different. Ashington is white as fuck. A man having long hair was even considered

radical. To be clear I am white and male (and it's important to be clear about these privileges also) so it wasn't too bad for me in some aspects of my childhood. I was excited about leaving that homogenous bubble and to go to one of those unis like you see in movies where the campus is mad as fuck and there are so many different ethnicities, cultures, backgrounds, subcultures. Sounds great doesn't it? But nah, turns out every cunt is white, middle class, and from Kent. That's an exaggeration, sorry, some people at Durham uni are from Surrey. Obviously not everyone was middle class, but it felt like it. And those who weren't middle class were upper class. On my very first day I met more upper-class students than working class students and the rest of my fellow students were blatantly middle class (they smelled like hummus ok). Which was the first time in my life I had ever been around mostly non-working-class people. Or at least the first time I was aware of it; I'm sure I once accompanied my parents into a Laura Ashley shop.

The thing is, at the time, I didn't even know what class all these other students belonged to (I'm pretty good at telling now and yes it still is the hummus smell trick). I just knew I was different from them. And this is important: at Durham uni they weren't different, it was me who was different. The first time it really kicked in and I really felt out of place was in my first week at uni attending 'matriculation'. Matriculation is this grand ceremony held in Durham cathedral. It is described in the uni regulations as "the act of placing a student's name upon the matricula or roll of members of the University." Aye you're right, it is as wank as it sounds. We all had to don our black gowns, heading to a Hogwarts for muggles. I looked like a prick. But then again, we all looked like pricks, it just seemed like I was one of the few pricks who actually felt like a prick. We all strutted our way through the streets of Durham like a shit, posh miners gala. A brass band of cunts, all blowing our own trumpets.

I've always wondered if maybe I've exaggerated my experiences

as an undergraduate or maybe I'm too sensitive, but the data suggests otherwise! Almost 40% of Durham uni students went to private school. Now you might think "well that means the majority went to state school so that's not so bad". If you do think that then you're a dafty. You're a dafty because: (a) only 7% of all children in the UK go to private school, and (b) recent information gathered in 2019 shows that just 5-7% of Durham Uni students come from 'low participation neighbourhoods' or in other words 'poor places'. Which means the overwhelming majority of the 60% who are non-private school students went to pretty decent schools and lived in very middle-class areas. Those coming from high socioeconomic areas outnumber the poor students 10:1 which basically means that for every 1 scruff you have 10 toffs. So, it really makes sense why I felt so different from the majority of the other students. And it's the first time I've ever felt very different to the majority (which is a privilege in itself). That feeling of being different was a big surprise and I don't think I had the confidence to deal with it very well.

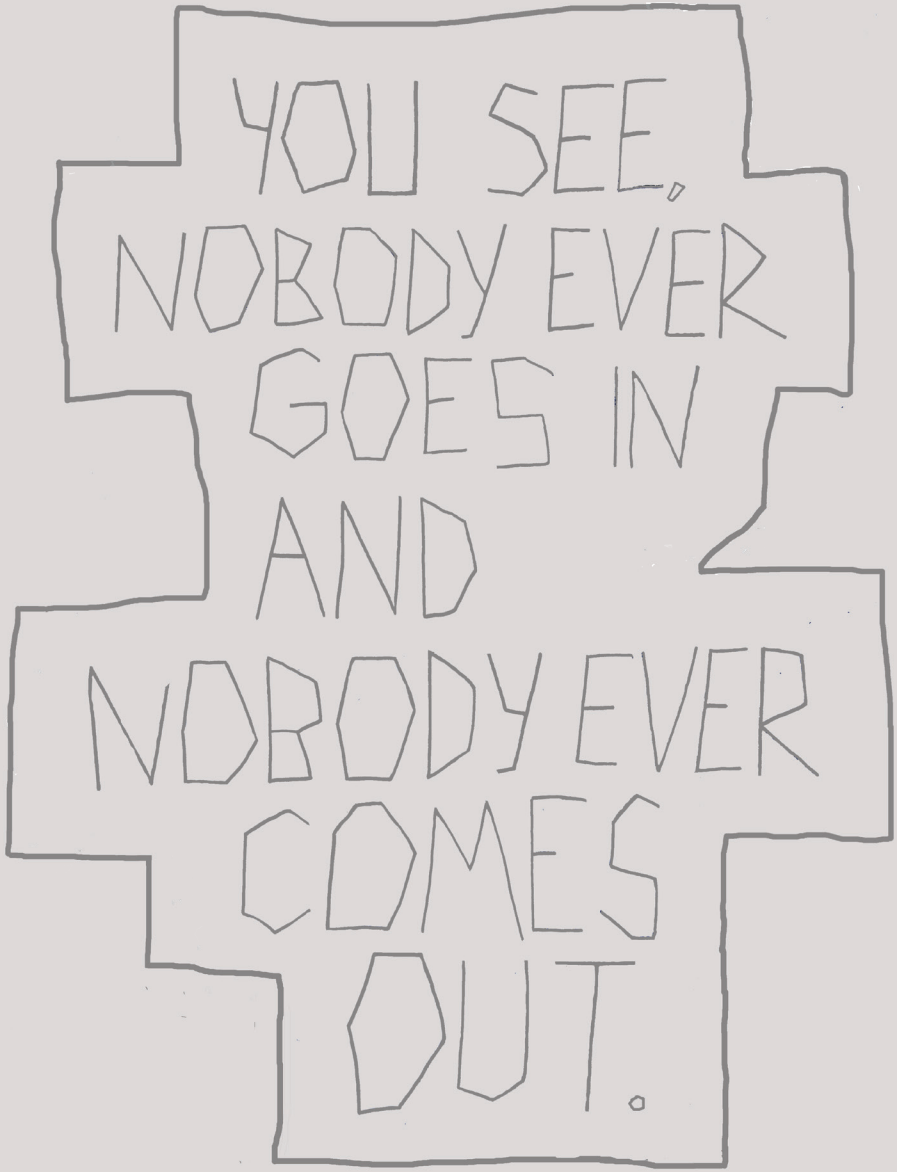
It's been 13 years since I dressed up like a prick and attended matriculation (did I mention how much of a prick I looked?) and I have since completed a PhD and now work as a postdoctoral researcher at Durham Uni. Since graduating in 2009 I have lectured, trained, demonstrated to and taught loads of Durham uni undergraduates (not so humble brag). I mostly struggle to reconcile our upbringings. The things we share are an interest in science and with this I can manage. But whenever childhood comes up, I just know I'm going to have to explain what poor people are and what they do. And it's very difficult to do this in a polite way without sounding like I'm starting a class war (by the way I am starting a class war). I always manage to do an ok job until they say something stupid like "well as long as you work hard it doesn't matter what class you are", and even more infuriating is when they use me as proof of that theory. I always remind them (maybe too aggressively sometimes) of not using evidence selectively and as

good scientists we should be able to recognise anomalies and not base our theories on them. That normally shuts them up. Think they'd rather accept my point than admit they are shit scientists. To be clear, I always treat every student the same but I will recognise those students who lack confidence and they are overwhelmingly the ones with an 'accent'.

Academia is a weird but very comforting place. Like living in a library or a school or even a hospital. Places that to me, feel safe. Maybe because they represent things which we have collectively paid for and share (and all smell a bit bleachy). They are institutions which have massively benefited working-class people. University has been great for some working-class people in some regards. But as the numbers suggest, the fancy universities (such as Durham) are still dominated by the middle and upper classes and mostly benefit those people too. Prestigious universities are no doubt packed full of undergraduate students who are entitled little shits. However, those who stay on at university for further study or careers seem to be a certain type of person and they are mostly middle class. Fortunately, those people are typically non-racist and they believe in equality for women. I've never had to endure an awkward racist conversation. But I still frequently meet people who have some offensive views of the Working Class. And it highlights to me how socially acceptable it is even in circles of intellects (boffins, nerd burgers, wankers or whatever you like to call them) to be classist. And class is still this thing that people don't like to acknowledge about themselves. I think it's a privilege you can more easily hide and therefore don't have to face up to. Nobody chooses their privileges and we shouldn't be mean to people about their privileges, but we should acknowledge them. I've met so many middle-class academics who will rightly complain about race and gender inequality but have been hiding their own class privilege. It's easy to see if someone is white or male and that they have inherent privileges (shame so many of those people can't see that themselves though).

If you spend enough time with people you can get a sense of their class privilege and I've been able to do that with my fellow colleagues (not in a creepy way I hope). Like every cunt can ride a horse and some people have even openly admitted, without any shame or self-awareness, that they prefer a jus to straight up proper gravy! A jus is a shite, expensive, watery gravy. It's shameful to enjoy it more than gravy. Luckily most of those middle-class academics, although they may lack proper experience of working-class people, are kind and empathetic enough to care about class to some extent. They might not like acknowledging their privilege but at least most of them care about poorer people to some extent. Which unfortunately is more than I can say for many of my working-class friends from school. That's the most unusual experience I've had by far: middle-class people caring about working-class people more than other working-class people whilst at the same time being embarrassingly middle-class and ignorant about the Working Classes.

Fortunately for me and my working life the real morons and snobs are more concentrated in the undergraduate pool of Durham uni students so I spend more time with the kinder, middle-class academics (even if it does make me reek of hummus). Academia does not pay anywhere near as much as daddy's company, so those posh undergraduate wankers leave after three years. But every year they are replaced with fresh ones. Young, confident, and completely ignorant of working-class life and working-class people. And every year a new batch starts their journey as a student by attending matriculation. For the past 13 years I have walked past many a matriculation event. The smug, entitled faces of so many students in their black gowns can really set my day off with a bad mood. But then my rational side kicks in. These teenagers are just a product of their environment. It's irrational to be angry at them, and some of them are actually working-class (for now). One thing is for sure though, they all still look like pricks, and I still feel different.


YOU SEE,
NOBODY EVER
GOES IN
AND
NOBODY EVER
COMES
OUT.

# RADICAL CHILD PHENOMENOLOGY

or how to look after your heart when you're underclass



Dudley II

Trauma doesn't live in bank accounts, ASBOs or passports. It lives in bodies. All kinds of traumas live in mine. Underclass trauma, (white) colonization trauma, addiction trauma. And so, what I am is too fucking traumatized to break the law.

I grew up with a strange secrecy in my immediate and extended family. In its shortest form something like, *fear* sushhhhh! There was no "don't talk to cops". There was only "don't talk". Talking was snitching. I was told, don't get tattoos so you can be easily identified, and definitely don't tell anyone your name. Everyone had nicknames for each other that only family knew. We didn't live in Ireland anymore but something lingered.

I have no actual connection to most of my family anymore, for the things that happened to them turned them to stone. There was a real chance I would join them, though I didn't live through a colonial conflict with guns on the streets I inherited the psyche. It's brittle, lonely, and defensive and this all became apparent in adult life. I wish that when I went to the doctors with anxiety instead of advising me to get a job or take antidepressants they asked me if my family was in a war. Because I see now that so much of my internal condition was not about me. It was my inheritance. Decisions made 600 years ago!

This pervasive fear had a profound effect on my mental health. In my early twenties I got paranoia, this was only alleviated by being seen by the state. I needed evidence of where I was all the time in

case the police asked. To be on CCTV or make a card payment in a shop was a temporary relief. Underneath was a deep feeling I could be taken away at any time. I was 29 before I admitted to any health care professional the sort of thoughts that were happening in my head. Because I had a deep distrust of them, and was told to keep everything in, when all you have is a hammer (talking=snitching) every problem seems like a nail (shhh!). The hauntings of a colonial ghost inside me. After generations of holding it in, I could hold it no more. Which is easy for me to say, because I was out of the place the conflict happened. It is a deep colonial wound with a class wound piled on top of it.

In my teens my step dad's business was illegal. Our house was raided by the police multiple times. One parent got an ASBO and the other went to prison, so we lost our home. I was homeless at 14 with mum, brother, and two babies. Because the housing association who owned the house, since its privatization, could get three times the value we were entitled to pay for it, having occupied it for ten years. This had a profound effect on my development and kept my nervous system in emergency mode for fifteen years in a cycle near impossible to escape. (I sat and passed my GCSEs when I had no home. I still don't know how I did that.) It's how the legacy of Thatcher's right to buy, her division of the working class, lives on in my body. All these decisions come to live in people's bodies, one way or another. And anyone who profits from home ownership has that, and the thousands of kids who grow up experiencing homelessness, on their conscience. (Subtly different from the abstract child - the fascist's child, here I'm identifying as a child like Genet in The Criminal Child where he recollects about being criminalised before ever becoming legally an adult).

Being surrounded then, by anarcho vague security culture and a macho fetish for the cops isn't appealing. I am not making a moral judgement on breaking the law for resistance or survival, or fun I suppose. But for me, because of these experiences, hiding turns

the world upside down. It flips reality from something ordered and safe to something scary that I need to attempt to control to exist in. Corners become sharp, and beg to be straightened. The compulsion to do irrational things to cope returns. And what waits behind that corner, I know, is a relapse.

So I can't break the law, sometimes this leads to me being read as weak or compliant by my more privileged comrades, who have the networks and the internal resources to survive a run in during direct action. And who have made breaking the law synonymous with being radical. I'm sized up in a new climate camp or radical bookshop. They don't know I'm sizing them up too. I see the choice in their eyes. And they can choose to go back at any moment. See I have been in a police cell and the thing that struck me was the crying of those more privileged folks I was with.

Direct Action gets framed as giving stuff up, which is good if you got stuff, but then it gets universalized. Prison is conceptually based on this notion too. It's designed by rich people, for whom it may well work for, lol. They think of taking privileges away as a punishment or a reform, depending on who you speak to. Either way what's lost is trust and privacy and protection granted to them by the state. But I've always been criminalized (by my class, my parents' choice of employment and my grandparents' immigrant status) and the problem was a lack of privileges in the first place.

I define underclass not with the pride afforded of being working class and doing honest work, but rather: people reliant on benefits or illegal methods of finance or not being considered a person at all. Which in all cases comes with the need to avoid being surveilled by the state and also a deep sense of shame because for all its claims of logic the law is actually very emotional but it doesn't have a body so it projects its feelings into us (Weird). I would describe these experiences as typically underclass, although the reaction to them is mine alone. As in, I am not saying all underclass people

have the same solution as me, to avoid crime to feel safe. Not that this class has any monopoly on crime, lol. Just on being watched.

Last year I asked @BlueBagLife (a couple who have documented their journey through the criminal justice system on instagram) to speak at a prison abolition event. I was not surprised they experienced grief from people who didn't like this concept of fully visible action. I get that people have trauma around the state but at times it's like security culture becomes dogma. Different classes will have different approaches to anonymity and struggle but let's form some solidarity. An addiction focused experience of prison is incredibly important documentation. A life lived out thousands of times but never witnessed. It's grounded in a deep sense of the truth of visibility. Of making prisons real. Of our fingers in the bars if we can't break them.

- It is not a story of reform or how prison saved Elliot. More how he survived it. And stokes in me, my obsession with trauma; where the story has gone (sometimes lost from memory, as the colonial ghost and sometimes hidden to protect people that live, as with addiction) but the feeling remains. Lots of us don't ever see our loved ones or parents become well enough to give up addiction or illegal work. Not because there is anything wrong with them as they are, but because the dangers that come with being criminalized are an added stress. For example, not being considered legally a child in the underclass was a huge relief - I couldn't be taken away by the social. It came way, way, way too close for me a number of times. Becoming legally responsible for myself was something I celebrated. BBL is a romance, not of love saving lives, love conquering all (though there is love in it) but of being legal. A story that can only come in a person's life when all the dodgy family members have died and one is fully legal themselves as in Lisa's case. Her Mum is safe now and can't be outed as an addict. And in the underclass there are only two ways I can think of for it to be safe to be outed. In death or in a prison cell. In a way that's

the only space for honesty but neither of these options resemble being living.

The line between those in the prison abolition movement out of necessity or because prison is a common life experience in the community and activists for whom it is a novelty, needs to be made more clear. And my demands are really to not be stared at by the state like they are waiting for you to do something wrong. To not have this pervasive feeling the rug could be pulled from under you at any moment.

Currently it isn't an understatement to say that my life is a mess. The full consequences of my class oppression, colonial trauma and addictions are all presenting themselves now. I'm too sick to work. Yet I must, because being sick is my new job and I have to prove it all the time and feel bad about it, cause benefits scrounger doesn't mean lying on a claim anymore. It means anyone who is on benefits that's not a pensioner. And we are considered guilty – not ill – and have to prove our innocence – illness.

I need so much time to rest and repair and my ambitions have been lowered to surviving. Reminds me of some George Orwell mood set out in 1984 and Homage to Catalonia but without the mud. How they were fighting pneumonia more than fascism in Spain. How the enemy is like the fifth thing down the list to worry about. How all you want when you are in a war is for it to be over. How it becomes about surviving and small things become enormous victories. Reminds me I am in a war. Because if you are in survival mode you really are in a sort of war. Because, as in 1984, there are enough resources for every human alive, just not the infrastructure and inclination to share it. A class war. And a war against sickness. No... more, against wellness.

I am in some ways very privileged, I'm white and have a degree. I see myself as spiritually middle class, if not financially. Defined as,

middle class people like me, find me interesting and validate me but ultimately won't/can't save me. I heard of an artist who was in the Venice Biennale and had hence "made it" except they hadn't because they died in the Grenfell fire. This reminded me everything I needed to know about class assimilation. It's not real. They want your art they don't want you. What knots me to the world and its exploitation and obsession with transaction is my reliance on Universal Credit and a British passport. Here is where I betray a part of my class and myself to exist. Make deals to survive. And I know I am lucky to even have that. A privilege of being a citizen.

And I believe I have the heart of a revolutionary. One fine day I am just drinking a cup of tea and a thought comes to mind... Ooh!!!! The company I kept, the books I read I am that too. It wasn't about the amount of times I had been arrested it was how I felt. Revolutionary heart is like, a bit crap as a description. Maybe it's like police brutality. You don't need the word brutality because police is inherently brutal. Maybe I just have a heart. Whatever it is it's a lifelong thing that I gotta keep healthy. Like the SPK say, we gotta protect ourselves against kidney stones as well as capitalism. So I guess action point to me, look after my heart. How?

On the one hand I'm traumatized but on the other I'm galvanized. What I've gathered is that I'm supposed to live, to not be bitter and prove I can still make beautiful things. That my heart hasn't become stone, and the past hasn't made me bitter. Creating interactions that are not transactional wherever possible. I wish this labour, my labour was seen as as important as illegal labour. Well, the illegal labour done by people as a choice, for illegal labour is only interesting when some do it. The labour of keeping myself alive. The labour of nurturing connection to others. Connection without exploitation of others; writing letters, raising money and helping others get out of survival mode, developing class consciousness for myself and my pals.

The most important thing I have as a tool is my emotional resistance. To not feel bad about being useless or broken for being unwell, for being scum for being a scrounger. There is only one thing for me now and it's to be a witness, and a witness is a powerful thing. It's not passive. I'm a witness not an activist, and the most I am is an artist. And one of the strangest and best things I appreciate about myself is that I have said I was an artist without any shame or guilt since I can remember as a small child. Despite my class and gender (and how loaded it sounds). And the adult me is incredibly proud of the child that knew that without being validated. Even if all of the adults who watch me grow aren't proud, I feel lucky to have watched this kid grow.

I almost dare not imagine what I would like to put the trauma right if the world asked, which it did not. First I think... I want a home. But that's so individual. Then I think I want all children to have a home. I could say all of everyone but there is something more powerful I feel in evoking the child. Connecting with the fact I was a child then, though I didn't feel like one. And with the other kids who don't get a chance to be kids. I suppose the criminal child Genet talks of and this homeless child I understand from my past both become the radical child. And as I heard the other day, I wasn't born a child, I became one.

As I see myself today then; a stray dog in capitalism. I hang out wandering about the streets with other folks like me. Sniffing each other's butts and blurring lines of intimacy, family and sexuality in cute, humble and queer ways. Taking turns to perform the many gendered roles that one needs to survive without becoming synonymous with any.

I'll never hide what I am or throw you all under the bus for a quiet safe life. Not that I could! I don't have that life, I never have. I guess that's the point. My family have been assimilated into whiteness. And I seem at first glance privileged, often I get miss classed, and so

I have to clarify that. But my roots will always be in the underclass and I'm always on that side of this world.

But I gotta take it easy. Am just gonna rest while all you who don't have the fear crack on. I believe in direct action and understand emancipatory violence but I can't take part. Especially not just for kicks. And, I urge you to examine your intentions when you put yourself, and others, in risky situations. I'm going down with you, but not in any literal or metaphorical mask. Not in the isolation I felt in addiction or poverty. Not in the dark. I know that being "good" won't save me from repression but it does save me from neurosis. And if this all sounds a bit clockwork orange to you, like I have no choice but to be a good citizen, then you would be right. It's lucky for me that words aren't illegal and they can do some damage.

DON'T SNITCH!
SHHHHHH!

Image by Stevie Rankin

# A Working-Class State of Mind

Colin Burnett

Ah laid the boax ae painkillers alongside the boattle ae Smirnoff vodka oan the coffee table. It doesnae even matter tae me that ma flat is that cauld it wid gee an Eskimo the shivers. Aw ah kin focus oan is the troubling thoats which are circling aroond ma heid like a vulture stalks a dying animal. Jist waiting fur the right moment tae pick through the bones. Each thoat bringing another feeling ae hopelessness and his gid pal, despair. Thirty years oan this planet and what do ah huv tae show fur it? A TV they dafties fae CSI could trace back tae John Logie Baird. Ah heard earlier, oan the morning news, that the PM, Boris Johnson, hus called a press conference fur later in the evening. You jist ken that means somebaody is gontae suffer. As ah go tae light the joint ah hud pre-rolled in anticipation ae ma final act oan this planet, ah suddenly caught sight ae a spider dangling fae a long silvery thread in the corner ae the room. This tiny creature wis trying tae swing oantae the shelf wae aw its being, but still it couldnae muster the strength tae make it. Ah'm

sitting here hinkin tae massel, Jist gee up, ma wee pal. You'll never make it. Take it fae someboady who hus the t-shirt and the mental health issues tae prove it.

Aw, will yae look at the state ae this cunt. Jesus, ah look like Keith Richards efter a weekend in Amsterdam. Honestly, av goat tae laugh. Ah mean, how hus it came tae this, eh? Aye, the man upstairs has shot fae the hips and done a right number oan me. Yin minute it's yur sweet sixteen, the juices rushing tae yur baws, andreline pumping through yur veins, and the world seems like a tidy hing jist waitin fur yae tae fuck her. God, ah wis fuckin fearless back in the day; ah hud such dreams. Then, suttin happens, suttin Nostradamus couldnae huve seen cumin; yur life flashes by yae at internet speed. The next hing yae ken, yur starin doon the double barrel ae thirty years ae pain and disappointment. Aw, yur still a pup, ah kin tell; yuv still goat that fire in yur belly, that hunger tae dae suttin wae yur life. Gee it time, it will comm tae yae as well, the flies will become that bit quicker, the shelfs that bit further awey, and if yur lucky, some cunt like me will come along tae stand oan yae and its aw oor very quick.

Aw, dinnae worry, nae harm will come tae yae by ma hand. You've goat character, ah like that. There's a loat tae be said aboot character. Yae see what huv ah been tellin yae, there's nae point in tryin tae succeed; yae jist end up lookin like a porn star wae a yin-inch dick. Kin yae hear that? That faint voice at the back ae yur mind, the yin taunting yae and laughing at yur every failure. The yin whispering intae yur ear that yur nae gid tae nae cunt. Git yaist tae it because it's only goantae git louder and before you'll ken it, you've foond yur new best pal.

Ah live in the sixth richest nation in the world. And yit, ah kin hear Susan Boyle singing fae the rooftoaps, and tae tell yae the truth, ah'm even half expecting that Irish boay fae the telly tae turn up at the door wae Pudsey the Bear in tow. Aw, what's his name again?

Looks like Gandalf fae Lord ae the Rings, only efter he's contracted an STD. What's his bloody name again? Oh, aye, Bob Geldof, that's him. Aye, that's the boay. Mean, ah hink he wis actually oan the telly last week campaigning tae save a distressed-looking tree or summit. Yae see, aroond here, it's no the courts ae law or the politicians who keep the peace; it's the drugs. Picture this scene: each morning ah awake fae ma coma, then ah sit oan ma patio chairs because ah cannae afford a decent couch. Ah sit there wae ma bowl ae Coco Pops whilst ah watch shows that kin only be described as propaganda against the working class. Ah mean, jist the other day, there wis this boay oan Jeremy Kyle who wis convinced his cat wis the anti-Christ. It wis summit tae dae wae the cat sitting oan his phone and dialling 666. What's the alternative? Change the channel and listen tae a graduate ae Hogwarts annoonce tae the nation that seeing me droon in poverty hus jist became a national priority. Either choice is hardly a substitute fur intellectual capital.

Mean, the only hing ah've goat ae any value is this tattered-lookin watch ma granda left me. Ma mate Fraser is intae aw they antiques shows oan the telly. The way the cunt goes oan, you'd hink he's a curator at the British Museum and no oan remand fur robbin a couple ae posh stately hames. Ma mobile starts ringing oaf the hook at aboot half seven at night. As soon as ah answered the phone, Fraser starts tae yell doon the line, "Bawbag, yur a fuckin millionaire." Ma first thought wis he must be back dain acid or summit, so ah hung up the phone oan him. Aboot a half oor later, ah hear bangin oan ma door. It wis yin ae they polis knocks, ken? The yins that aboot take the door oaf at the bloody hinges. Fraser comes chargin in aw oot ae breath and gaspin fur air and then mutters, "Yur granda's watch, it's worth a million quid. Ah seen the exact same yin oan the Antiques Roadshow the night." At first ah thought he wis fuckin wae me, but yince ah could see his pupils wur still dilated, it started tae hit me he wisnae taking the piss efter aw.

We were baith wettin oorselves at the thoat ae aw that money. First hing the next morning, we made a few calls tae git a jeweller tae value the watch. Oan aboot the fifth call ah made, we wur put in touch wae an expert ae watches who hud a jeweller's oan Princess Street. This wis yin ae they places posh cunts go tae git their dicks up. As we stood ootside the building, Fraser eloquently took this opportunity tae remind me ae his claim tae a share ae the money: "Aye, childhood pal, and remember it wis me who telt yae aboot the fuckin hing. And dinnae furget ah peyed yae back that tenner. That's a hunner grand ae any rich cunt's money."

Ah couldnae believe ma ears; ah stood there wae three quid in shrapnel jinglin aboot in ma pocket, and this cunt wants a hunner grand oaf me. This boay dressed in a tuxedo and bowtie who looked as if he wis waitn fur a bell tae ring to go and wipe his masters erse greeted us in reception. Ah could see by the glare in the boay's eyes he wisnae used tae cummin acroass two rough and tumble boays like us in his line ae work. He directed us intae his office and started tae appraise the hing, and efter aboot a couple ae minutes he telt us suttin we should huv kent aw along: it wis worth a pittance. The colour fae oor faces drained awey, along wae oor hopes ae a wey oot ae this fishbowl we caw a life. Dinnae git me wrong, if ah had hud the energy, ah would huv taken Fraser tae the roof ae the buildin tae throw him oaf and then halled him back up fur an encore. The way that cunt hud been goin oan, we wur aboot tae dae a deal wae Sotheby's. Poverty does that tae yae. It isnae jist a word fur politicians tae throw aboot tae git oor vote; it's an illness ae the mind, boady, and soul.

Ah foond this half-empty boatle ae Smirnoff vodka ma mate hud left behind fae last weekend. Efter pouring masself a gless, ah raise it tae make a toast tae ma new companion, "This is fur you, little yin. Cheers." Aye, but again, the wee man faws shoart. He'll learn, he'll see. Ah wis yince like him, a fighter. Now ah'm jist tired and ah feel sick at hert. That's the hing aboot dreams and aspirations.

They're jist a fairytale story wur telt by oor parents. A fuckin make-believe idea that gees us hope that hings will git better. An idea that a naeboady kin become a someboady yin day. The truth is the maire you try tae reach fur the stars, the closer you become tae reachin fur the boattle. It's like when wur bairns wur telt tae be gid and Santa Claus will bring us loatsae presents. It's a beautiful idea, but there comes a point when we realise wuv been had. Aw it takes is fur some smart erse tae come along and tell us Santa's no real. Then oor hale world is flipped upside doon. That's what dreams and aspirations are in life, it's aw yin big fuckin Santa Claus. Ah've realised summit likes, and that is that guys like me and the spider kin chase oor dreams, but we'll never make it. In the end, fuck Santa Claus.

Dinnae gee me that look, comrade. Ah cannae help boays like us are destined tae be the pun ae the system's jokes. It's no us who make the rules, but it's sure as shit us who huv tae follow thum, um ah right or what? Yae dinnae need tae convince me it's no fair we huv tae hide in the dark like some diseased-ridden rat. Ah wisnae bullshittin yae earlier; ah wis like yae, many moons ago the now, mind yae, but ah wis yince full ae ambition tae. Aye, that watch ae ma granda's, he gave me it when he thoat ah wis gonnae be a someboady. Back in the day ah wis a promising wee fitbaw player, ah even hud a trial wae the mighty Hibees. Aye, in another life ah mighta been a professional player and it could huv been ma name in neon lights above Easter Road. What happened, yae ask? Aye, well like a loat ae folk fae here, ah wis a victim ae circumstance. Ah became maire bothered aboot what ma mates wur up tae at the weekend, and then came the drugs. Before ah knew what wis happenin, ma dreams ae makin it oan tae the pitch became a distant memory and ah wis oan the fast track tae this point in ma life. Ah wonder, though, yince ah guzzle doon a few ae these tablets and yae sit and watch as ma lights turn oot, will ah make it oantae the pitch in the afterlife maybe? Jist maybe, ah might.

Mean, maist ae the boays ah hung aboot wae at school spent some time at Her Majesty's pleasure. Funnily enough, ah bumped intae an old mate fae school the other week doon at the bookies. There ah wis, wishing a thoosand deaths oan the jockey ae ma fallen hoarse, when ah hear this voice that resembled a foghorn.

"Chrissy, long time no see, eh?"

As ah turned aroond, ah wis faced wae Matty Johnson, who we hud nicknamed Bananas oan account ae him being a lunatic. He hud jist served a two-year sentence fur GBH when he attacked a guy wielding a mace. Ah mean, in this day and age who owns a mace? It alone actually uses yin. Some said he hud a fascination wae Game ae Thrones, but who knows. We baith chatted awey tae each other like auld times, then he asked, "What yae dain wae yurself the now?"

Ah told him, "Jist trying tae survive another week oan the dole."

Then Matty eagerly explained to me the benefits ae prison. "Ah'm telling yae, Chrissy," he says, "you need tae spend a bit ae time inside. Three square meals a day and nae bills. Fuckin quality, man."

Ah stood there hinking tae masself, Surely, it's no came tae this. Ah've goat tae be incarcerated tae stay ootae the foodbank?

Ah mean, this is the place people come tae make it. A place where you kin be whoever you want tae be. And here's me taking career advice fae a mace-wielding psycho while ah watch a hoarse decide whether ah will huv food in ma belly or a roof oor ma heid. Wae each waking moment, ah try tae convince maself, something will turn up. Take a long hard look aroond, hings are doon aw acroass the board. You've goat Mr Burns in the White House. Guys who widnae normally steal as much as a penny chew are huvin tae steal tae feed their fuilies. Aw, and if that wisnae bad enough, some

pencil pusher in London hus decided tae take it oan thumselves tae inspire the nixt Charles Dickens.

The maire intently ah watch the spider, the maire care he seems tae take in his attempts tae swing oantae the shelf. Ah'm no shaire if it's the weed or the vodka or maybe a combination ae baith, but ah'm starting tae hink this wee guy is oot tae prove me wrong. This ballsae wee bastard is game, there's nae disputing that. Though again, he takes a sip from the fountain ae failure. You see, it's in oor DNA tae fail, whether it be me or the spider, we always end up daein what's expected ae us. Which is tae come up shoart. It's the price ae being the underdog. Aw, ah git it noo, the cobwebs huv been removed, if yae pardon ma pun. You hink this shit box ae a flat ah've goat came easy tae me? That accepting a life ae poverty wis the easy choice? Lit me tell yae suttin, ah grafted maist ae ma days tae end up wae fuck all. That's what aw these rich cunts kin never understand; it takes aloat ae blood, sweat, and tears tae git where ah um.

It's strange though, how hings come back at you, yae ken? Memories. Thoan conversation wae Matty talking aboot the old days and ah wis a sixteen-year-auld bairn again. It goat me hinking aboot the time ah spent in high school. Yae've goat tae understand yin hing, bairns fae ma area wur maire tolerated than encouraged by the teachers.

The teachers wurnae able tae see beyond oor tracksuit or how we would say 'ken' insteed ae 'know.' Aye, in their eyes, the factory flair beckoned for us when we left school. Granted, at the time ah didnae realise they wur huving a premonition because that's exactly where ah ended up. Well, that wis up until a few months ago. When ma boss imported a machine designed in China that could operate quicker and cheaper than a pair ae hands. Honestly, ah hear aw the time folk aroond here complaining, these immigrants are coming ower here and stealing our joabs. Naeboady mentions

R2D2 is the yin waiting in the wings tae pull our plug. Wae jist a few crumbs ae encouragement fae ma teachers though, hings could huv been so much different. Ah might huv owned a factory insteed ae serving as a drone in yin by pressing a button aw day. Aye, ah could see it now, 'Christopher Mathews, a captain of industry'.

This time the spider is close, real close. Ah've goatae admit, this wee guy hus aloatae hert. The maire ah've watched his struggles, the maire ah've come tae realise we are kindred spirits. We baith try and fail time and time again. The strange hing is this insignificant fleeting moment in life hus kept me fae drawing ma final curtain. Maybe ah wis jist looking fur something tae hud oantae before ah depart this mortal realm. Something, anyhing, that might show me there is still hope left in this world insteed ae the miserable existence that waits fur me oot there, waiting patiently tae greet me like an auld friend. Ah appreciate yur efforts tae show me there's another wey tae dae hings, that hard graft kin pey oaf someday. Ah mean that, nae shit. The truth is it's inevitable; we will choke when oor big moment comes along. Ah wid love tae believe yae, but 'that's life' as auld blue eyes once said.

It isnae like ah'm stupid. Ah ken the difference between a dream and a memory. Ah kin tell you the meaning ae love. But what um ah gonnae tell St Peter when ah meet him at those pearly gates and he says, "Tell me aboot what you learnt fae yur time oan earth, ma son"?

"Well, St Peter, ah ken a gid joint when ah puff it. You'll need immortality tae witness Scotland qualifying fur a World Cup. Aw, and ah learnt tae appreciate the meaning ae poverty."

Nah, there's goatae be maire tae aw this than that, or what's the point? The other night, ah wis searching Netflix tae find summit tae watch. Ah came acroass a film ah hudnae seen in years: The Truman Show. That guy wis in it, the yin who used tae be funny –

Jim Carey. Aye, he played this boay who realises his whole life hus been scripted. Dinnae git me wrong, it might huv been the weed talking, but ah couldnae help but hink boays like me aw live in oor very ain Truman Show. We grow up, work in a joab that serves tae kill our 'spirit', then we settle doon, maybe huv a few bairns. And when the time comes tae draw our final breath, wuv accumulated enough debt that our creditors will be holding a seance. Aw because society tells us we need a flash motor, designer clothes, a holiday abroad yince a year, and a fuckin credit caird. The truth is, aw we are dain is making sure aw these rich toffs huv made a tidy profit fae our time spent here, and aw the while we produce the nixt batch ae workers tae take our place oan the chain gang. The greatest trick those in power ever pulled wis gitting the workers tae believe we aw huv equal opportunities.

Ah kin feel these box ae painkillers daring me tae swallow a few ae thum, and then it will be over and oot. Nae maire ae this pain. Ah might actually be at peace fur yince. Earlier, ah went along tae the cash machine oan the high street. Ah punched in ma pin, and ma balance ae thirteen quid and eighty pence sent ma hert flutterin. Ma breathin became shallower and ah thought ah wis huvin a hert attack right there and then. So, ah decided tae Google ma symptoms; it turns oot ma obituary wis bein written yesterday. Ah jist thought tae masel in that moment, this life is jist too hard, and ah wis set tae end it aw until ma eight-legged hero arrived. You ken what? Ah've kept faith in a system ma entire life that hus promised sae much tae boays like me but gave us sae little. That's why if this spider kin make it oan the fourth attempt then ah'm gontae gee this hale 'life' hing another go. Watching the wee guy, he seems tae huv sensed what's at stake here. This time, he seems tae be taking maire caution. It almost seems as if he's goat a plan ae action here. Aye, that's it, son, you're nearly there. Cmoan, yae kin dae it. Ah fuckin believe in yae, ma hairy little friend.

Ah cannae believe ma eyes. He's done it; he's oan the shelf. "Yes!"

# Lend me some sugar, I am your neighbor

Ciara Fears

Don't be scared, I am your neighbor
I live just on the street

around the corner where the seagulls
pick the French fries from the greasy bags of
takeout.

I saw your daughters blowing bubbles on the
balcony. They smiled down at us people below —
Iridescent circles kissing asphalt.

Please, don't be scared. I'm your neighbor. I'm your servant.
I'm your witness.

I feed the cats on those trash can dregs.
Don't you see? The chorus of friendly
yowling at night, because of me.

And if I smile at you too long,
it's not because I'm crazy
(it's not because I'm murderous,
it's not because I'm ravenous,
though I never said that wasn't true).

It's because I'm scared too.

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# Exploring Social Housing

Martha Wragg

**Exploring How Social Housing's Legacy Has Impacted Social Commentary Within Design Spheres, Using Park Hill Flats as a Case Study.**

In a period marred with a social housing crisis, it's commonplace that the history shrouding post-war projects is cast back upon with hazy judgement. Caricatures of what once was, "quite crude stereotypes of council estates" (Thomas, 2011) being peddled left, right and centre by media outlets world over.

This interference from the media for a long time had obscured the image of housing from mere dwellings into concepts that sprawl far beyond their original meanings. These portraits of social housing are often crafted to ignite visceral emotional responses from others who have no claim to these spaces as homes. This in turn creates a new cultural significance, constantly developing concepts that are touched on by the cornerstones of our society. Exposure in art, film and fashion has seen the fortuitous creation of liminal boundaries in the public's expectations and perceptions of social housing. This level of entanglement has its own set of implications, rendering some accounts and representations to be misleading and at worst inauthentic.

One particular estate that's existence interacts with these stereotypes is Park Hill flats, Sheffield.

On a personal note, Park Hill holds a special place, generations of my family have inhabited the space, both prior to its decay and subsequent to its regeneration and their narratives. It is the warmth and fondness when describing their livelihoods in Park Hill that first sparked my interest in this area; the juxtaposition of their accounts with how the space is construed in narratives that are accessible to the wider public. Their pure admiration for the place

paved the way for this conversation around the redevelopment of the area. Managed by Urban Splash, the regeneration set out with aims to "make Park Hill a special place and knitting it into Sheffield" (Urban Splash, 2014) and to "soften its brutality" (Urban Figure 1: Dilapidated Park Hill Flats Splash, 2014).

Social housing first and foremost occupies the city landscape as a home, a concept that is universal, "known to literate and non-literate peoples, hunter-gatherers, and sedentary farmers, as well as city dwellers" (Tuan, 1977).

Theoretically, its truest purpose is to provide a safe and comfortable environment for "households who are unable to afford to rent from the private sector or buy their own home." The word 'social' as part of this phrase has often reached further than merely to describe the state funded and provided nature of the housing. It has, over time, offered itself to the idea of these places as communities, as a homeland for a whole demographic, housing generations upon generations. A prime example of this is Sheffield's Park Hill Flats, which in the bones of its design considers the interactions of the inhabitants as a whole, with its 'streets in the sky' serving not only as a focal design point but as a platform for social connections and the construction of a community. As Reyner Banham points out "their width is sufficient to accommodate children's games and small wheeled vehicles for deliveries and furniture removals, they gather up all the entrances to flats and maisonettes" (Banham, 1961).

This sense of community arguably defines much of the personal narratives surrounding this example of social housing, "the landscaping, layout and personalization of a suburban house" (Hull, 1992) serving as a means of self-expression and conveying one's identity to the outside world. Park Hill's exterior and design proved to be no exception to this, with each detail informing "neighbors and visitors something of the owner's values, beliefs, life-stage and

life-style" (Hull, 1992). These extensions of personal identity feel to the inhabitant as though their home environment is cohesive with their moral compass and how they define themselves. So when dialogue opens up attacking the ways of life within social housing, "residents with place image congruity may feel they are being misinterpreted by others" (Hull, 1992).

Historically, a dissonance between inhabitants and outsiders has been present within the realms of social housing. Researching around Park Hill flats and speaking to previous inhabitants has revealed that there is some truth to this statement in real terms, with individuals placing emphasis on the positive experience they had there, insisting "can you make sure you tell them it were good". This reiterates the loyalties these marginalised communities feel towards their home space despite negative press, inseminating former Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock's idea that such discourses "didn't change their affiliations, or their commitment or their sense of identity at all" (Jones citing Kinnock, 2011).

In the wake of government policies such as the 1979 Right to Buy legislation, which was once described by Michael Heseltine as the bill that would lay "the foundations for one of the most important social revolutions in this century" (Jones, 2011 citing Heseltine). However, as hindsight has shown this was not necessarily the radically positive enterprise the government and potential buyers had once envisioned. Whilst it did serve some well, it has ultimately stripped certain demographics of the chance to ever enter onto the property ladder, with poor incomes meaning they were left with very few options in terms of renting. Moreover, a vast proportion of social housing properties had been purchased, leaving the local government unable to offer housing solutions to those in dire need. In the present day, Park Hill is "another instance of the extremely limited council housing stock being sold off and privatized", (Hatherley, 2011), excluding its original and arguably deserving users, in order to house those wishing to purchase a fibre

of Sheffield's history. This momentum has in part been rendered inauthentic by its high price points and complete regeneration. Redevelopers in charge of the project, Urban Splash, have taken an approach which adds, "what the architects call 'shimmer'" to appeal to "people who might not like the idea of council estates" (Moore, 2011.) With this technique of disguise, the home of the working class is translated into a monument to be swooned at and admired, a wolf in sheep's clothing. With this in mind, it poses the question, why is there such a desire from what could be considered an outsider to obtain such housing? Why has a property that was once described as "a perfect place for muggings" (Sillitoe, 2014), and "Little Chicago" (Bryant-Mole, 2017) become a high-demand piece of real estate? The consensus would suggest that these types of narratives which have surrounded Park Hill for decades since its conception would surely be enough to put off a gentrified buyer. However, this was a carefully calculated move by Urban Splash, with design choices impacted to try and attract "a new breed of resident" (Urban Splash, 2013). Measures Urban Splash have put in place borrow ideals from the original Park Hill flats which housed a number of amenities such as public houses, convenience stores and childcare facilities. However, Park Hill has been transformed into more than just a domestic space, since its regeneration it has developed a business infrastructure set within the space where homes previously sat. This space now accommodates commercial facilities in the form of offices and conference rooms for businesses, with Managing Director Simon Gawthorpe estimating "there is going to be probably be about 200 people working here when all of the commercial space is fully occupied" (Gawthorpe, 2015).

Providing space for design agencies, production companies and public services such as nurseries and a dentist practice is yet another element of gentrification that Urban Splash have put into place to dilute the previous reputation of the space. There are other factors that have altered the way this type of working class culture has been received by society, seemingly evolving

into a revered artistic subject. In recent years popular culture movements have offered a voyeuristic insight into a working class, playing on classic stereotypes yet presenting them in a way that is glamourised. Taking away certain elements that are often considered too gruesome for universal consumption, offering the public a palatable version of the sometimes-gritty reality of social housing and its inhabitants. A pivotal instance of this, and one that is most prolific at the current time, is the fashion industry's continual fetishizing of the working classes. This has subsequently trickled down into mainstream culture, appropriating class emblems one editorial shoot at a time. Within this, it is not just the dress codes, consistently borrowed from the social group. Rundown council estates have found themselves at the heart of this fascination, providing an 'authentic' backdrop for clothes that replicate those of the inhabitants, but at high price points far out of reach for low economic groups that would actually call a social housing estate home. "A homeland has its landmarks, which may be features of high visibility" (Tuan, 1977), and social housing is no exception to this rule.

These landmarks now find themselves attached to connotations that have not stemmed from the inhabitants' memories of home, but rather from social commentary and debate around their homeland. An extensive conversation that does not always include those who belong to the group, leaving them without a voice. As Jerico Mandybur points out this "sets up a barrier between those who "get it" i.e. the irony-literate middle class, and those who are left out of the joke i.e. the lads, who despite being the source of inspiration, are deemed social scum." (Mandybur, 2014). This supposed appreciation of working class culture in fact further isolates and alienates its original members, rendering their traditions and ways of life into a version of a public monument, open for all to interpret, whilst often ignoring the struggles they face as a socio-economic group. This representation spans further than just lad culture. Since the 1990s these themes have been ubiquitous

within the fashion industry, and have subsequently dominated conversations and established panic in wider popular culture. Such periods were defined by “heroin chic” and “dirty realism” (Ledford, 2007) which was characterized by aesthetic codes that were essentially “mocking poverty” (Ledford, 2007). “Models with blank or strung-out expressions, an unkempt appearance… often set against seedy backgrounds” (Ledford, 2007). In Ledford’s description the term “seedy backgrounds” is interchangeable with social housing, based on expectations of social housing being a dangerous underbelly of society. This caused panic within society as media outlets voiced concerns of what type of example this what setting for the youth of the moment, placing blame not only with the fashion industry for glamourising such troubling activities but also with the social groups who were said to inspire this imagery. The media once again used this opportunity to open up an age-old dialogue, turning society’s gaze onto the working classes, turning social housing and its inhabitants into a scapegoat for widespread problems and therefore a form of public enemy. As Burke points out, not all minorities have “been invited to the table to help make and share decisions” (Burke, 2018). This is reflected with the lack of opportunities for the working classes in creative fields, which can often be put down to practices of nepotism and jobs going to those with high social standings or nowadays a large social media following, usually buoyed by paid advertisements and endorsements from brands. Whilst in principle this seems like it may pave the way for a level playing field it actually seems to be creating a wider cavity in opportunities for the working classes, leaving them unable to fulfil the criteria that makes them appear suitable for some roles. Some would hope that social media and its far-reaching presence in day to day life could provide a platform for honest dialogue, but it too has been turned into an exclusive consumerist/capitalist machine, with those with more disposable income to flaunt being rewarded with ever more promising prospects. Even when young creatives from low economic groups do approach this platform to promote themselves and their work

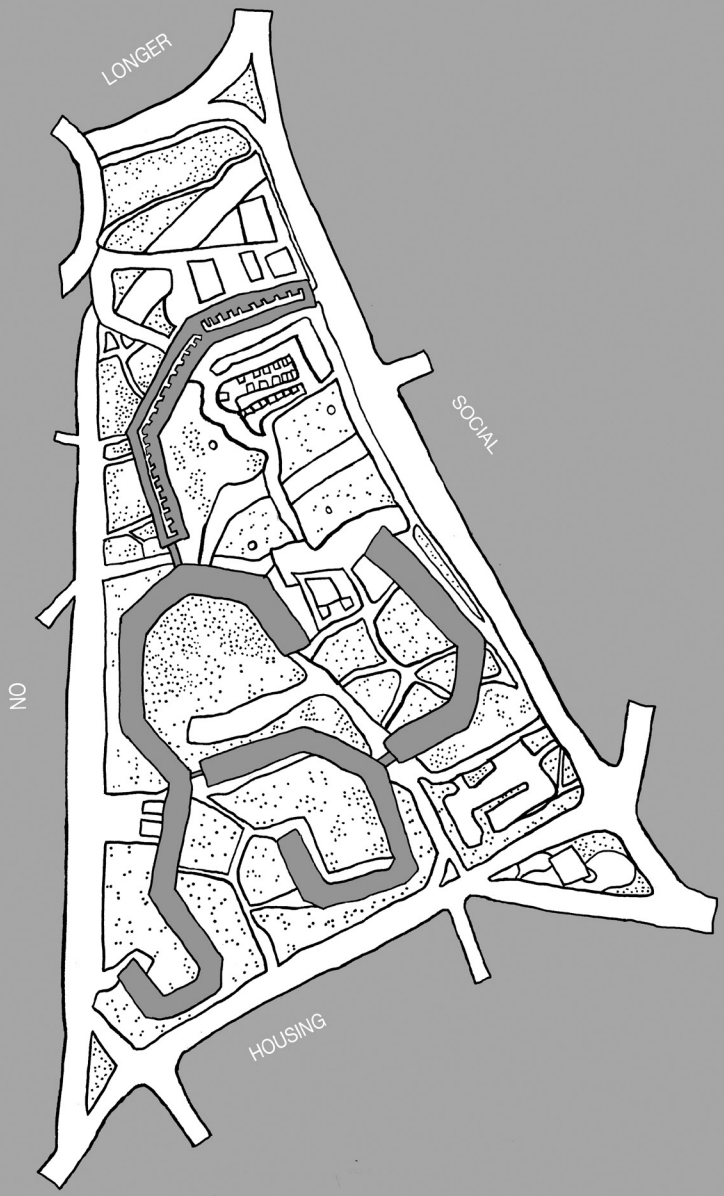
they are often met with the same motives as they are within their real lives, away from the screen. Many brands have capitalised on this, often plagiarising work from creatives without the funds or the voice to defend themselves and protect their intellectual property, leaving them unpaid and uncredited.

Although the fashion industry has been largely influenced by nepotism, that is not to say that lower socio-economic groups have exclusively been left without a voice in this sphere. There are exceptions to this rule, and one of the key institutions that provided this vehicle for the working classes to convey a message to the masses was The Face, a magazine founded in 1980. As fashion historian Paul Gorman describes it, The Face sought to chronicle "when street fashion and pop music were co-opted for individual personal expression" (Gorman, 2017) and to utilize these culture clashes "as forms of social and political critique, as well as used to champion the rights of minorities and propose alternative lifestyles, tolerance, diversity and integration" (Gorman, 2017). Although this did involve depictions of social housing, council estates and tower blocks, the pragmatics conveyed by the images and stories were noticeably different: these storylines were made with a certain admiration and familiarity, seeking to uplift the subject. The intent was to provide them with a sense of recognition and to encourage them to embrace their background, rather than encouraging them to aspire to more. The Face and all it stood for and represented through its choice of contributors and their subjects was a move to inspire others outside these parameters to acknowledge working class conditions as valid ones. Although The Face no longer exists as a title, its socio-political legacy does. Since its closure in 2001, this model of thought and acceptance has been carried through to other publications, with photographers such as Alasdair McLellan being at the forefront of giving lower socio-economic groups involved in fashion a right to tell their story and share their pride. The cornerstone of his projects often emphasise the sense of anonymity that is laced through working

class narratives in the eyes of an outsider. To this audience, the protagonist will soon fade when the image is removed from view, with no understanding of his or her way of life. McLellan's images when seen by an outsider appear frozen in time, they could be anywhere in the country, in any time period. Yet to an individual from the working class they can easily identify as the protagonist, the backdrop is theirs, and the scene belongs to them.

Figure 3:
'System, Doncaster' by Alasdair McLellan

The history of social housing and the narratives surrounding it has been a turbulent one, but it is a dialogue that is proving its longevity. It seems that this discourse will be ever present while social housing exists. With this in mind it is hard to predict where this will meander in future, it is difficult to imagine whether more exposure and engagement with this topic will bring along positive change, or whether the masses will remain devoted to age-old stereotypes. The dark cloud that sits over this topic only seems to grow as a Tory government continues to roll out policies that target society's most vulnerable groups. The effects of which inevitably become most tangible in the Northern crevices of England, against which Park Hill is set, a place that seems altogether forgotten in the grand scheme of the country's growth, a notion that was set alight in the founding days of Thatcher's residency at Number 10 and has smouldered in ashes ever since.


LONGER
SOCIAL
ON
HOUSING

# A book of Red Flags, Chapter 3

Kate Thomas

I'm dating Henry now. I wedged my way into his life by hanging round with his sister, Camilla, who was in the year below me, but never really went to school. Her parents never pushed her to go because she helped out a lot with her younger siblings. She had two younger brothers, Scott who was 10 and Riley, 8, as well as a little sister called Bethany who I think was 4 when I first started hanging round at their house. Camilla's mum reminded me of Morticia, the mum in the Addams family. She was pale faced and always wore black and drove a fancy car, but her husband was certainly far from the romantic gentleman, Gomez. More like Uncle Fester in fact, with abs. Her dad's name was Frank, most people would recognize him from the 70s pop band Crying Eagles. He was the one with the hair stuck up on end like a peroxide shark in Ray Bans.

Every day when school ended, Camilla met me at the bus stop by her house and we walked to the skate park to drink cans of cider and watch her brother and his mates try out new skateboard tricks. My mum was getting pretty sick of me coming home steaming and arguing with her. The worst time was my 15th Birthday. I bunked off school to go and meet Henry and his sister and when I turned up late to my own birthday family meal, my dad noticed I'd been drinking and I smelled like weed. They all stood up and left. They told me not to come home until I sorted myself out, but I was happy with the way I was living my life. I didn't understand why I had to go to school and I wanted to stay with my friends having fun at the skate park, so the next day when my mum and dad were out at work and my brother was in school, I went home and made up a suitcase of clothes and CDs. Now that I lived at Henry's house and wasn't going to school, I had to pitch in. Their dad had a newsagents in town named after himself, Frank's News, so I started working there. The school rang my mum to say I hadn't been going in, but she didn't mind as much because at least I was working and

showing that I was willing to make my own way. I was there most days putting out that day's newspapers and sending back the old ones that hadn't been sold. There were always so many because at the time there was a boycott of The Sun newspaper after what they reported about our local football fans who were killed at a match after a disaster at the stadium due to police incompetence. I remember Henry saying The Sun were always up to shady stuff to get a headline. Once they even hacked the phone of a young girl who died in a tragic accident and leaked her private conversations. So I always had a smile on my face sending a huge stack of their rags back to their offices. Eventually I didn't even have to do that because people would just run into the shop and grab the lot to burn them in the center of town.

At the end of every day Camilla would steal a small bottle of Vodka and two packs of 20 Sterling Super Kings from behind the counter while her mum was cashing up the day's takings. We would go in Henry's room when we got back to drink and watch Cheech and Chong for the millionth time on the projector shining on the wall. By now they had both started to bully me a bit, using me to go to the shop, sending me for weed. Once they licked Rizzler papers and stuck them to my eyebrows while I was asleep. They set them alight and it took weeks for them to grow back. The little brothers were always fighting too. Once Riley cut Scott's goldfish in half out of spite and put it back in with the other fish for Scott to find. I think the lack of their father's presence was really taking a toll on their behaviour, Camilla was starting to get jealous of me because whenever her dad came home, which was fairly rare, he would only take her out if I came too. He said that I needed a parent in my life since I got kicked out of my house, which was really what his own family were missing. I thought he was just being nice to begin with, taking us for expensive meals and to auctions where he would spend loads of money on things he never saw because he was never at the house. I soon realized it was all a front for what he had planned next.

After a while he started taking me and Camilla to grown-up parties with his rich friends. This always impressed her and I think she was happy to be spending time with her dad. The parties were always in brand new apartment blocks with barely any furniture apart from in the bedrooms and maybe a table in the kitchen that we would sit at to drink expensive Icelandic vodka or fancy Italian wine that one of Frank's friends would bring when he had business there. I didn't like going as much as she did, because whenever I started getting really drunk one of the men at the apartment would ask me if I wanted to kiss him. He said I could call him uncle Raymond, but he looked nothing like my uncle, and my uncle wouldn't ask me to kiss him. This became a regular thing amongst Frank's friends until one night Camilla snapped and told me to just kiss him, "it's only a kiss" she said, laughing and pushing me towards him. By now me and Henry had died down because I was always getting drunk and being silly and loud with his sister. He told everyone he broke up with me, but still had sex with me after everyone else was in bed. Self-named Uncle Ray grabbed me hard when he put his tongue in my mouth. It tasted like cigars and my arm stung where his wedding ring pinched . His fingers where callusey and rough, like his tongue. It was like snogging a cat with a moustache I thought as I went to the toilet embarrassed. Camilla followed me in and gave me a new, unopened bottle of vodka; "Swig that, Simon wants a kiss too and he heard you being sick so brush your teeth, he doesn't want your sick gob".

I winced at the thought of leaving the small ounce of safety I had contained in the bathroom. My hair was wet with sweat, but I was so cold that I had goosebumps all over, I'm sure half of it was the fear of being laid on top of again. It made me feel like I was trapped inside a grave, buried beneath the gross entitlement of these rich older men; thinking because they have money, they can do whatever they want to my body. Well If I was rich, I'd fly as far away from here as I could possibly get. And I'd never look back.

# On Jacob Reposing

Frank Raffety

Lying on those benches is quite common,
Lies are much of what is said beneath that roof,
These fork tongued snakes would sell your blood for bingo sheets.
You don't believe me? Would you like some proof?

The Prime Minister now denies he shut down fire stations,
When he was in charge of London, a few years back,
He told the critics of that fatal plan to: "get stuffed!"
In Kensington, Grenfell Tower looms, smoke black.

Before he was PM you thought him funny,
You thought him charming, silly, often comical,
Ignoring all those facts you knew about him,
How with the truth, he's always economical.

By that we mean he lies, from when his eyes are open.
Every day, from dawn till dusk, this proven liar,
Will tell you what he thinks you wish to hear him say.
There are no great lies to which he'll not aspire.

The EU wants to unbend your bananas,
that was one of his… and £350 million quid
each week, towards the NHS…
hung high from banners, billboards, buses... that lie slid.
And now, unelected, sat in Downing Street, this squatter,
Tells you porkies, with his trotters up, inside.
As his right smug chums begin to gamble away our billions.
And the pound collapses, should you panic? Should we hide?
No. Boris tells us all, there is no need to worry.
When we all escape, next week, from Europe, we'll be fine.

As if we're in some World War 2 type prison drama
And the EU's the stalag, to which we've been confined.

If that's the way you choose to view those countries,
To whom we've been forever linked, who are our friends.
Then Mr. Johnson is the man, for all your seasons.
But don't say I didn't warn you, how it ends.

If you follow him into this xenophobic gutter,
Along with Trump, Duterte, Modi, Salvini, and Orban.
Myself and others will oppose you, here, forever.
Til' you're all smashed and shattered statues in the sand.

That was a nod to Shelley... from us, the lower orders.
We will not accept your twisted words, your bitter plan.
We deal in facts and truth and principles. We damn you!
With your lies, your fibs, your stories. Understand?

Can you tell if an orange is rotten just by looking at it?
JADE

# The Jab

Romford, Essex, 2009

Rebecca Metclafe

‘Well I’m not getting it because you can’t get cancer unless you’ve had mmmph, and you can’t have mmmph until you’re sixteen.’

Jess Potter’s logic stuns us all, even if she does say mmmph instead of sex.

The campaign appeared on tv earlier in the month, with an advert showing the arm of a girl our age going about her daily life at home and school, telling us to ‘arm’ against cervical cancer and get the HPV virus jab. Matching posters arrived in school earlier that week and now lined the toilets, corridors and classrooms. We were an all-girls school, and teachers talked openly about sex and cervixes; it was only certain male staff members who ever looked a bit awkward, mainly because they were outnumbered. Tampons and sanitary towels would be handed to those who needed to make an unexpected dash to the toilets and we felt no need to

be discreet about passing or throwing them across the classroom in order to do so. That didn't mean we were always serious about these things. There was the time when some girls doused sanitary towels in pasta sauce from the canteen and stuck them to the wall in the art department toilets. The shrieks of those who found them could be heard all the way to the P.E office.

I do remember that everyone was incredibly serious about the new vaccine for HPV and cervical cancer though. The memory of Jade Goody was still strong, this being only a few months after her frequently televised illness and death. For weeks, girls scrawled "save Jade Goody" across their schools planners and surrounded it with hearts, clicked "like" on Facebook pages commemorating the Essex-born star, and hashed out "RIP Jade" statuses when the tragic news came. It was almost as if one of our own had been lost. We were the first year to be offered this new free vaccine, and as the news of Jade had done, it occupied most of our conversations. This is how several of us came to be sat around a table during morning form-time, with Jess Potter sat centre stage giving her speech about why she wasn't getting the vaccine.

'Thing is though,' says Cassie Morris, 'you can get cancer without having sex, and the vaccine lasts ages anyway.'

We all nod in agreement. We like Cassie Morris.

'Only a few years,' replies Jess, 'and you can't even have… you can't even do it till you're sixteen, and that's a few years away anyway.'

'So, you're going to get it soon as you're sixteen?'

'What if you have sex before then?'

'Loads of girls in year nine have done it!'
'But do you want to end up like Jade Goody?'

'What if you don't have sex at sixteen, will you wait till you do have sex to get the vaccine, so you get more years out of it?'

Jess doesn't have verbal answers to these questions, only a confused expression.

'Well,' she says, 'I mean, obviously I don't want cancer, but…'

Jess is interrupted by the bell, demanding we all head off to Period 1. For most of us that means double P.E, not something we're particularly thrilled about. We all trudge out of our form room and down the corridor before separating into different changing rooms. I'm in the purple one. None of the group from form-time are in here, but my friend Abbey Lewis is and so I quickly go and plonk my bag down next to her, on the first bench to the left when you walk in through the door. We've got hockey first, which means Miss Carter, who was born in the 1950s and then went backwards. Outside of the P.E department she's most frequently seen standing up in assemblies, imploring us all to visit the prayer room she's set up in the sixth form block. The room is clad in crepe-paper Bible quotes and fuzzy-felt characters: Miss Carter designed and created it completely on her own, as despite her best efforts to persuade people, no one would help her, not even the girls in Year 7, who could probably have done a better job

While we're all getting changed into our P.E kits, she walks into the changing room and leans against the wall near me and Abbey.

'Abigail!' says Miss Carter, 'have you visited the prayer room recently? We've got prayer cards now!'

Abbey mumbles something and then pulls her shirt over her head in a bid to not be seen. Everyone is pretending not to notice Miss Carter is there and starts talking intensely to the people around them. I hear the word 'vaccine'.

'Miss,' comes the voice of Lauren Hope, who is standing on the other side of the changing room, 'what do you think of this cervical cancer jab? For that HPV thing what Jade Goody had? Because Jess said she wasn't getting it till she has sex.'

Miss Carter looks across to Lauren. We can already see she's blushing. Although most of the teachers try to be upfront and open about sex in an effort to get us to think sensibly about it, Miss Carter would rather the word wasn't in our vocabulary at all. Her felt Bible characters won't even hold hands.

'Err, well,' Miss Carter says, taking a deep breath in.

'Because,' interrupts Lauren, 'we all thought you could still get cervical cancer even if you haven't had sex. And the jab means you won't get that HPV virus and it won't develop into cancer like Jade Goody had.'

'Your health is very important, girls,' says Miss Carter, cautiously. 'It's important to understand the biological side to these things, you know. And looking after your body is very important – '
'Where even is your cervix, Miss?' asks Bobbi Louise, Lauren's friend. 'Is it the same as your vagina?'
'Bobbi!' says Miss Carter, blushing even more. 'Don't be so vulgar!'
'That weren't vulgar, Miss,' says Lauren, 'vulgar would be like if she said fanny or minge.'
Miss Carter turns scarlet.
'Well, the main thing is like I said, looking after your health is very important, which is why it's so important to exercise! Now come on, get changed and head onto the field!'

She leaves the changing room as quickly as she arrived, and P.E passes without any more vaccine comments. A few girls try and say the word fanny loud enough that Miss Carter can hear, to see if she turns crimson again, but she seems oblivious. No one brings

up the actual vaccine again until after break, when we have English with Miss Mackenzie.

'Right, girls,' she says, sitting herself on top of the front desk, with her feet resting on the back of a chair, and flinging her dog-eared copy of 'Much Ado About Nothing' to one side, 'did I tell any of you lot about the smear test I had done the other week?'

We shake our heads.

'Right, well it told me two things. First that my cervix is at a weird angle, and second that I don't have anything abnormal going on down there.'
'Miss,' someone says, 'aren't smear tests supposed to really hurt?'
'I mean it's uncomfortable, but I wouldn't call it painful. I suppose it depends on you. But the nurses are always lovely though, they make you feel very relaxed. Especially if your cervix is at a weird angle, like mine.'
'Is it more uncomfortable if your cervix is at a weird angle then, Miss?'
'No, they just have to make sure they get it at the right angle, which for me meant sitting up a bit on a cushion. It took a bit longer than it would normally, but it was still less than five minutes.'

Ten minutes into the lesson and we're still talking about cervixes. No one has even mentioned Shakespeare yet, but we have all had a thorough discussion about HPV, cervical cancer and Jade Goody. 'Right, enough about preventing cervical cancer,' she says suddenly, 'we should probably discuss 'Much Ado' a bit.' She picks up her copy of the play and begins flicking through it. 'Ok, so, the wedding scene. Act four, scene one. Who here thinks Claudio is being a complete prick?'

Everyone laughs. Claudio is definitely a prick.
'He's being well out of order towards Hero, Miss,' says Abbey Lewis.

‘Find an example of that?’
‘Well he’s waited until their wedding day to shame her in front of everyone, but she ain’t even done nothing wrong.’
‘He has, and how does he describe her? What language is he using?’
Abbey shrugs her shoulders.
‘Anyone have any ideas?’
‘He calls her a rotten orange’ says Lauren Hope.
‘And what do you think he means when he says that?’
‘Well,’ says Lauren, thumbing through her shared copy of the play, ‘it’s like, she’s gone off. He’s calling her all manky and horrible.’
‘Is that all he’s saying?’ asks Miss Mackenzie.

Lauren stares again at the book and then shakes her head. ‘I’m not sure.’
‘Anyone have any ideas?’ says Miss Mackenzie, ‘what Claudio might mean by rotten orange?’
No one answers.
‘Well,’ said Miss Mackenzie, ‘can you tell if an orange is rotten just by looking at it?’
‘Not if the peel’s still on,’ someone says.
‘So it would look normal from the outside?’
‘But inside it would be all disgusting and manky, only you wouldn’t know,’ says Abbey.
‘Right, and do you think there’s any symbolism there?’
Again, there’s silence.
‘Do you think the image of the fruit could be a metaphor for something else?’
‘Is it cervixes, Miss?’ laughs Lauren, and the rest of the class also erupts into laughter.
Miss Mackenzie’s face stays serious. ‘You could certainly read it as being yonic imagery, yes.’
The laughter stops and there’s a murmur of confusion around the classroom.
‘What’s yorick imagery?’

‘Yonic. It means imagery that’s meant to represent the vagina, or female genitals in general. Think, oysters, clams, flowers, anything like that.’

Miss Mackenzie gets up off the desk and picks up a whiteboard marker. On the board she writes the words “yonic imagery” in big capital letters, and then the word vagina next to it in brackets.

‘Miss,’ says Bobbi Louise, ‘is your cervix the same thing as your vagina? What’s the difference?’
Miss Mackenzie rolls her eyes. ‘Alas poor Yonic, I wish they knew you better. And I really wish they’d teach proper biology in this place.’
‘We’ve not done that yet in biology or anything, I think that’s Year 9?’

‘Well I won’t go into too much detail because we need to get on with the written exercise for today, but although you could call the whole area the vagina, medically the vagina is only a small bit of it. There’s also the cervix, the vulva, the labia, the clitoris; there’s a lot going on down there, some inside and some outside. Although most people do just use the word vagina to mean the whole area overall. And when Claudio says Hero is a rotten orange, he means that her vagina is spoiled and disgusting because she’s had sex before marriage, or at least he thinks she has. He’s not just saying that she’s disgusting for cheating on him, he’s saying her vagina is spoiled. Remember, what time period is this play written and set in? What do you think the attitudes were towards women who had sex before marriage? This play is from a time when women were literally the property of their husbands. Claudio sees himself as owning Hero, and legally he will do once the wedding ceremony is over. Whoever he thinks Hero has had sex with has defiled his property. Hero isn’t just disgusting for having cheated on him, but for having sex before marriage as well.’

There's a murmur of understanding throughout the classroom, and the scratching of pens in exercise books as people note down what Miss Mackenzie has just said. The rest of the lesson is spent on the writing exercise, which involves writing a paragraph analysing the wedding scene and then reading some of them out. Everyone's includes multiple uses of the phrase yonic imagery and the word vagina, although when reading aloud several people still say Yorick imagery. God knows what Miss Mackenzie will make of them when she reads them all through, I think, as she collects them in for marking. Part of her will probably be proud that we're slowly learning more about the female body and its rights and welfare – the rest of her is probably going to despair at our severe lack of grammar and apparent inability to listen.

The rest of the week passes without any new comments on cervical cancer, vaccinations, vaginas, or Jade Goody. That is until the following Monday, when a rumour arrives at school as the first bus rolls up outside and grows with each new arrival until there's room for nothing else in our form rooms during the morning register.

'Oh my fucking God, did you hear about Lauren Hope?'
'Lauren Hope's a slut.'
'She's done it, at the weekend, at Meghan's house party, with a guy from St Martin's.'
'He's in Year 10 and everything.'
'Eurgh, the dirty sket.'
'Sket.'
'I know, right.'
'Slut.'

That was the word that resounded most in the conversations we had upon finding out that a 13-year-old friend of ours had apparently had sex with a boy two years older. No one had taught us it or its meanings and connotations, not directly at least. We knew there was power in those four little letters. What we didn't

know was how to use that power, or how that power could be used against us. We only had to open a copy of the Daily Mail to see what society thought of girls like us and the women we would become; girls with our backgrounds and our way of speaking. All of it could be summed up in that one little word. A mass of hatred and contempt in four letters.

'Please don't use that word, girls,' said Miss Mackenzie, when she overheard some of us saying it as we filed into her English lesson to continue working through Much Ado About Nothing.
'It's true though, Miss,' said Abbey Lewis, 'she's a right sket. I don't get how she can be that slutty. I'm frigid and proud, me.'
'Is Lauren a rotten orange then?' asked Miss Mackenzie, picking up her dog-eared copy of Much Ado About Nothing as we all took our seats.
'Well…'
'Because surely, when Claudio calls Hero a rotten orange, it's just a more poetic way of calling her a slut. We all agreed last lesson that Claudio is being very unfair and cruel to Hero in saying that about her.'
'Yeah,' said Bobbi Louise, 'he's being well out of order.'
'So, if it's not acceptable for a man to criticise a woman for her sex life, why is it ok for another woman to do so?'
The whole class fall silent at this.
'Anyway,' said Miss Mackenzie, picking up the register, 'where is Lauren today? She was here last lesson?'
'She's not in today, Miss.'
'Hmmm, I wonder why that is,' said Miss Mackenzie, as she ticked off our names. 'So long as she's in tomorrow. You've all got the first of your three cervical cancer jabs, haven't you? You wouldn't want to miss that.'

She didn't. And so, the next morning Lauren Hope shuffled off the 274 bus and down the school's front driveway alongside the rest of us. Each form group was allotted a different time slot for having the

jab and given a piece of paper with our name and details on it. 15 minutes before that time we filed out and lined up outside the school hall. Temporary booths with curtains, chairs and a nurse's trolley in each, had been erected amongst the posters for the lunchtime music club and the year 7 charity bake sale.

We queue up, all holding our bottle-green blazers and school jumpers that we've hastily pulled off, and wait to be called.

When it's my turn, I enter the little makeshift booth and hand my piece of paper to the nurse. She's a woman of about 40 with warm reddish-brown hair and a tan. She invites me to sit down on the hard, plastic chair. I dump my bag, jumper and blazer on the floor next to the chair and sit down.

'Morning!' she says, with a smile, 'how are you today?'
'Yeah I'm good,'
'Excellent, and you're here for your HPV jab aren't you?'
'Yeah,' I say, nodding.
'And do you know what this jab is for?'
'Yeah, it's for the HPV cervical cancer thing. Like what Jade Goody had.'
The nurse nods and scribbles something down on the paper I've just given her.
'And is there any chance you could be pregnant?'

She whispers this and almost seems to giggle.

'No,' I say confidently. It crosses the back of my mind what other girls might say to this. Maybe there's a reason the nurse is whispering.
'Excellent,' she says, talking again at normal volume, 'now, which arm would be best to have the injection in?'
'My right arm,' I say, 'I'm left handed.'
'Excellent, can I just get you to roll your sleeve up a bit, and you'll feel a sharp scratch.'

There is indeed a sharp scratch on my arm, and then the nurse puts a small dab of cotton wool over the spot where the needle went in.

'All over,' she says, smiling again, 'we'll get you a plaster.'

A moment later, the cotton wool disappears, and a small circular plaster is stuck onto my arm instead.

'Now, your arm might feel a bit sore for the rest of the day, but that should wear off. We'll write to you with the date of your second jab. But you're free to go now.'

Back outside the tiny booth, in the main body of the hall, everyone who's had the jab is milling around while putting our jumpers and blazers back on.

'That well hurt.'
'I didn't even feel it.'
'Seriously right, I think my arm's about to drop off.'
'Looks fine to me?'
'Did yous get asked if you was pregnant?'
'Yeah I did, what do they need to ask us that for?'
'I know right, how many Year 8s are gonna be pregs?'

As we're stood there chatting, Lauren Hope emerges from the closest booth. Our chatter ceases, and we all awkwardly glance elsewhere.

'Hiya,' says Lauren, as she approaches us.

Some of us glance up and say hi back, some of us glance up and smile. A couple don't look up at all.

At that moment, Miss Carter pops up, seemingly out of nowhere.

'Come on girls, no time for chit chat! Back to lessons! Blazers on, please!'

Everyone hurriedly pulls their blazers back on and makes a swift exit.
We have English again with Miss Mackenzie.

'Take a seat, girls,' she says as we all enter, 'I've marked all your essays on the wedding scene in Much Ado, they're on each of your desks.'
As I take my seat, I turn over the piece of paper on my desk and see the letter A written on the top next to a big smiley face.
'Take a minute to read carefully through my feedback, while we wait for everyone to arrive. You all had your HPV jab just now didn't you? How was it?'
'Yeah it was alright, Miss.'
'I thought my arm was going to drop off, Miss, I reckon I've got gangrene or something.'
Miss Mackenzie frowns. 'That would be a bit unusual.'
'My arm well hurts though.'
'Injections can do that sometimes, but it'll wear off. Anyway, the benefits of this jab outweigh the pain in your arm.'
'So are we protected from cervical cancer now?'
'You'll need the next two jabs but then you'll be protected from the HPV virus, which can develop into cervical cancer, but, yes.'
'So we won't end up like Jade Goody?'
'I sincerely hope not, girls.'
By this time, the last of our class were arriving from the art gallery and the makeshift nurse's clinic.
'Right, now we're all here, we'll make a start. All of your essays are on your desks with my feedback. You all did pretty well, although some of you need to remember that the phrase is yonic imagery, not Yorick imagery, but overall, I was impressed. And I just want to read you a paragraph from one of your essays that I think sums it up particularly well.

Miss Mackenzie picks up a sheet of paper, a photocopied page of one of our essays, and begins to read. I quickly recognise the writing as my own and decide to sit very, very still so that no one else in the class notices.

'What essentially Claudio is doing in this scene, is trying to control Hero: not just her, but her body and her image in their society. He sees her as his property, as if she is just an object. He thinks he has a right to her body, and the thought of Hero having had sex before marriage makes him feel that a crime has been committed against his property (Hero's body). He isn't angry because he thinks Hero has cheated on him, he's angry because he thinks his property has been used in a way he doesn't approve of. This is why he behaves the way he does during the wedding scene. He attempts to embarrass and shame her for having had sex, regardless of whether it is true or not, because he thinks he has a right to her body'

At the back of the class, Lauren Hope sits in silence, alone.

# The Old Men Sing Jerusalem

Gaynor Beesley

Unsung songs die stillborn.
Sunday afternoons,
retired to their armchairs,
they watch Songs of Praise,
and strike a match
under Jerusalem.
My Grandads love,
bubbling molten from the gut,
scorched Dresden and Berlin
but forgot its chains,
were made in England.

www.theclassworkproject.com

LUM
PEN.

# How to Guide for Writing (With Us).

***Here are 9 points you need to know:***

1. We only accept writing from those who identify as working class or have experienced long term involuntary poverty and economic hardship.

2. We may accept writing of all lengths, but generally we look for anything between 2,000 and 4,000 words.

3. We accept all styles of writing – fiction, non-fiction and everything else.

4. For each issue we will suggest several themes and questions. If you want to write about something beyond these drop us an email as we might be planning a later issue that fits with it better.

5. If you've never written before or are lacking in confidence in your writing, get in touch. We can give support with your piece of writing, and devise different strategies with you to get your ideas out of your head onto the paper. For example, one article for a future issue could be a transcribed interview with a working class organiser.

6. Don't worry if you're not confident about spelling, grammar, sounding educated enough. What we're interested in is hearing your ideas based on your lived experiences.

7. Concerned about style? Don't be, we're happy to publish openly angry rants written in stattco rhythm or fictional narratives about killer avocados on toast and everything else inbetween. Whatever voice you feel comfortable using.

8. Please title your work, if you can't think of one we can help you find one.

9. Name yourself as you would like to see it printed, or state if you would like to remain anonymous.

**Happy Writing!**

## Tips for worriers:

Don't know where to start? Start in the middle. Just try to get your ideas down on paper. It's all practice.

Redrafting is everything. If you don't like your first draft, that means you are ready to improve on your writing.

## Get in Contact:

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GET IT TOGETHER
Image by Sam Batley

LUMPEN

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